

Christology

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CHRISTOLOGY

Samuel George

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FOREWORD

For many years theological education has been done within the well-protected campus with the primary objective of training pastors. Theological Education by Extension (TEE) is an attempt to do theology beyond campus. The vision of TEE is not confined to ministerial training programme of the churches alone; rather it involves equipping the whole people of God; it is for the *Laos*— the whole people of God. It seeks to empower the whole people of God for formation and transformation of the whole community and search to build a just and inclusive community in the context of the people of other faiths and to all people. Thus, the theological education by extension programme is meant to strengthen building an inclusive community. Those who go through the process of such education will be able to work not only “for” the people, but also “together with the people”.

To aid external candidates in their studies, the production of study materials was under consideration for a long time. We are happy that the resource materials are ready and I am sure this will greatly benefit the BD/BCS candidates especially those who do not have access to library facility. We record our appreciation to Rev. Samuel George, Principal of Master's College of Theology, Vizag, A.P. for preparing, *Christology*. We thank EMW, Germany, for journeying with us in strengthening theological education and making the resources available for the production of study materials.

Wati Longchar
Dean
Kolkata
July, 2013

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CHAPTER I

Person and Work of Jesus the Christ

Jesus Christ is one of the most intriguing personalities that the world has ever known. His question to his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” (Mk. 8:27-29 also Matt. 16:13-20) has reverberated down the centuries and have continually attracted varieties of responses. Schweitzer has rightly pointed out, “These diverse Christologies add new voices to the conversation about Jesus, his saving significance, and the meaning of life that has been on-going since his ministry began. Each of these new voices is worth listening to.”¹ Here in this monograph an attempt is being made towards a historical-theological survey of the Christological formulations. The endeavour here is put these into a text-book form for the students who are studying the course “Person and Work of Jesus the Christ.”

Terminological clarifications

Christology

Christian reflection, teaching, and doctrine concerning Jesus of Nazareth. Christology is the part of theology that is concerned with the nature and work of Jesus, including such matters as the Incarnation, the Resurrection, and his human and divine natures and their relationship.²

Christology is that part of theology which deals with Our Lord Jesus Christ.³ Christology (from Greek *Khristós* and -λογία, *-logia*) is the field of study within Christian theology which is primarily concerned with the nature and person of Jesus Christ as recorded in the canonical Gospels and the epistles of the New Testament.⁴

Jesusology

The terms Jesusology/Jesuology are used pejoratively because they suggest a reduction of the significance of Jesus Christ to what can be determined on immanent grounds by an historical method.⁵ Schubert M. Ogden popularized this term. By it he means a constructive answer to

the question of how God can be affirmed to have been fully incarnate in Jesus.⁶ It is a systematic study of the existence, nature, and teachings of Jesus, and his influence and relationship to human beings.

Historical Jesus/Jesus of history

The name “Jesus” in this essay refers to the figure, who was born, lived and died within human history nearly 2000 years ago. At times, this figure will also be referred to as ‘the historical Jesus’ or ‘Jesus of Nazareth’ by which we mean the life of Jesus, his words and actions, his activity and his praxis, his attitudes and his spirit, his fate on the cross and the resurrection. It is the history of Jesus.⁷ Wright writes,

[T]he words history and historical can refer to two different things: (a) past event, or (b) what people write about past events. Most people assume the former ... that [which] actually happened, not historians’ reconstructions [Any suggestion] that ‘historical Jesus’ must only mean (b), I doubt that this will catch on. Yes, that’s how many scholars use it, but not all. English usage allows, nay, encourages, sense (a).⁸

For our purpose ‘Jesus of history’ and ‘historical Jesus’ are used interchangeably.

Christ of faith

The Christ of faith is what was taught about Jesus after his crucifixion and resurrection – the post-Easter Jesus. The emphasis is more on the divinity and lordship of Jesus. As the early church grew, so did their “beliefs” about Jesus. The beliefs replaced the historical facts. It was in 1892, that Martin Kähler tried to distinguish between the historical Jesus, or the Jesus of *Historie* (history), and the Christ whom the church proclaimed in its Gospels, or the Christ of *Geschichte* (meta-history/ salvation history).

End Notes

- ¹ Don Schweitzer, *Contemporary Christologies: A Fortress Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2010), vii.
- ² <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/115761/Christology> (accessed November 11, 2012).
- ³ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/14597a.htm> (accessed November 11, 2012).
- ⁴ Gerald O’Collins, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical and Systematic Study of Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 1ff.
- ⁵ Roger Haight, *An Alternative Vision: An Interpretation of Liberation Theology* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1985), 314 f. n. 14.
- ⁶ Schubert M. Ogden, “Christology Reconsidered: John Cobb’s ‘Christ in a

Pluralistic Age’,” *Process Studies* 6, no. 2 (Summer 1976): 116-22.

⁷ Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator. A Historical-Theological View* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 50.

⁸ N. T. Wright, “No, we need history,” *Christianity Today* 54, no. 4 (2010): 27.

CHAPTER II

Jesus in His Own Context

Why is it important? What would it contribute towards the understanding of Jesus? are some of the questions that one encounter when one is studying Christology. It is the context that makes a person. So is it in the case of Jesus Christ. In this chapter, an attempt is made to know the context in which Jesus was born, lived and ministered.

Social/Cultural World of Jesus

Nazareth and its surrounding areas were populated mostly by Jews, but also some Syrians, Greeks, and Romans. Jerusalem, which was more cosmopolitan had greater ethnic diversity. The common language in the Roman Empire was Greek. However, the everyday market language was Aramaic. Hebrew and Latin too was used. People at the time of Jesus were mostly of rural and agrarian background. In a typical Jewish village, the synagogue was a central meeting place, and the seat of the local Jewish government. Houses were built with mud and kiln bricks. Usually these had 1-2 room squares, with dirt floors, flat roofs, low and narrow doorways, and front wooden doors. Often people would sleep on flat roofs during hot nights. The houses were arranged around a central shared courtyard where neighbours performed daily chores (cooking, laundry, etc.) in each other's company. Water was carried in from a public well and stored in a courtyard cistern. Lighting was provided by earthenware oil lamps. People slept on mats, and owned limited personal goods. Food was prepared by women. Two meals were typically served: Breakfast – light or small amounts of food taken to work; and Dinner – A large meal with cheese, wine, vegetables and fruits, and eggs. Fish, beef, and lamb were common non-veg food items. They also ate dates, grapes and other fruits. The inhabitants wore clothes that were typical of the middle-eastern context. The undergarment was called a tunic and the outer garment a mantle – it was loose fitting with fringes, bound by blue ribbon. Men wore a belt – a wide leather belt or cloth girdle. People also wore sandals on their feet, and a white cloth

over their head, hanging to their shoulders for protection from the sun. Family structure was patriarchal. The husband or the Father was the spiritual and legal head of the house. He was responsible for feeding, sheltering and protecting the family. Children were instructed early to honour their parents. A Jewish family lived by very strict moral, social and religious rules. It was a joint-family that consisted of parents, unmarried children, married sons and their spouses. They would often all live under one roof. Women were considered second-class citizens, akin to slaves. Women as followers of religious/social leaders were very unusual. The fact that they are mentioned as avid followers of Jesus is nothing short of a revolution that Jesus created. Jesus' family comes from a middle class society. His father, Joseph was a carpenter. His mother Mary, was betrothed to Joseph, however before the marriage she was found to be pregnant. After Jesus was born, Joseph and Mary had other children (cf. Matt. 12:46-47, 13:55-56; Mk. 3:31-32, 6:3; Lk. 8:19-20).

Political Context of Jesus

Christianity was born in Palestine, a small stretch of land on the eastern Mediterranean Sea. The Jews considered Palestine their Promised Land, but because of its desirable location it had been ruled by a succession of foreign powers for most of its history. Egypt and Assyria fought over it for centuries, and then Babylon conquered Assyria and Palestine with it. Next came the Persians led by Cyrus, who allowed the Jews to return to Palestine from exile, then the Greeks under Alexander the Great around 400 BCE. Rome took Jerusalem in 63 BCE, and Palestine was still under Roman rule at the time of Jesus' birth. In the hierarchy of power, the Jewish self-government reported to the authority of the local Roman government (King Herod), which reported to Rome (Emperor Caesar).

The *Pax Romana* initiated by Caesar Augustus quelled crime, allowed for the development of roads throughout the Empire, and gave citizens the leisure to think about religious matters. It is in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (42 BCE – 37 CE),¹ the second emperor of Rome that Jesus was probably born.² Some of the important political leaders during the time of Jesus were:

1) Pontius Pilate

Pontios Pilátos was the fifth Roman Prefect/governor of Judea.³ He served under Emperor Tiberius. Little is known about him until an inscription on a limestone block known as the Pilate Stone — a

dedication to Tiberius Caesar Augustus — that was discovered in 1961 in the ruins of an amphitheatre at Caesarea Maritima refers to Pilate as “Prefect of Judaea.”

The prefects’ primary functions were military, but as representatives of the empire they were responsible for the collection of imperial taxes, and also had limited judicial functions. They also had some civil and religious authority. He had the power to appoint Jewish High Priests. In all probability he resided in Caesarea but travelled throughout the province, especially to Jerusalem, in the course of performing his duties. He had around 3000 Roman soldiers under his direct command.

According to the canonical gospels Pilate presided over the trial of Jesus. His name will be forever covered with infamy because of the part which he took in this matter, though at the time it appeared to him of small importance.⁴ Philo (*Ad Gaium*, 38) speaks of him as inflexible, merciless, and obstinate. The Jews hated him and his administration, for he was not only very severe, but showed little consideration for their susceptibilities.⁵

In all four gospel accounts, Pilate avoids responsibility for the death of Jesus.⁶ His efforts to acquit Christ, and thus pass as lenient a judgment as possible upon his crime, goes further in the apocryphal Gospels and led in later years to the claim that he actually became a Christian. The Abyssinian Church reckons him as a saint, and assigns 25 June to him and to Claudia Procula, his wife. The belief that she became a Christian goes back to the second century, and may be found in Origen. The Greek Church assigns her a feast on 27 October. Tertullian and Justin Martyr both speak of a report on the Crucifixion (not extant) sent in by Pilate to Tiberius, from which idea a large amount of apocryphal literature originated. Some of these were Christian in origin (Gospel of Nicodemus), others came from the heathen, but these have all perished.⁷

Not much is known about his life after the crucifixion of Jesus except that his rule came to end when the Samaritans revolted and he was summoned to Rome for explanation.

2) Herod ‘the Great’ (73/74 BCE - 4 CE)

He was the Roman client king of Judea when Jesus was born. According to Josephus, he ruled for 37 years. He is known for his building/expansion of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Herod the Great appears in the Gospel according to Matthew (Ch. 2), which describes an event known as the Massacre of the Innocents. No other known source from the period makes any reference to such a massacre.⁸ Many modern biographers of Herod doubt whether the massacre took place.

The death of Herod is important in its relation to the birth of Christ. Jesus was born before Herod’s death (Matt. 2:1), but how long before is uncertain.

3). Herod Antipas (20 BCE - 39 CE)

He was the son of Herod ‘the Great.’ After the death of his father he became the ruler of Galilee. Herod was first married to a daughter of King Aretas of Arabia; then he took Herodias, his half-brother Philip’s wife, as his own wife. The New Testament Gospels state that John attacked the tetrarch’s marriage as contrary to Jewish law, while Josephus says that John’s public influence made him fearful of rebellion.⁹ John was imprisoned in Machaerus and executed. According to Matthew and Mark, Herod was reluctant to order John’s death but was compelled by Herodias’ daughter (traditionally Salome), to whom he had promised any reward she chose as a result of her dancing for guests at his birthday banquet.¹⁰

According to Matthew and Mark, he feared the ministry of Jesus as he thought that the Baptizer had been raised from the dead.¹¹ Luke alone among the Gospels states that a group of Pharisees warned Jesus that Antipas was plotting his death, whereupon Jesus denounced the tetrarch as a “fox” and declared that he, Jesus, would not fall victim to such a plot because “it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.”¹² Luke also credits the tetrarch with a role in Jesus’ trial. According to Luke, Pilate, on learning that Jesus was a Galilean and therefore under Herod’s jurisdiction, sent him to Antipas, who was also in Jerusalem at the time. Initially, Antipas was pleased to see Jesus, hoping to see him perform a miracle, but when Jesus remained silent in the face of questioning Antipas mocked him and sent him back to Pilate. Luke says that these events improved relations between Pilate and Herod despite their earlier enmity.¹³ However, there are some today who would argue that Jesus’ trial by Herod Antipas is unhistorical.¹⁴

About his later life and rule we know that he fell in favour with Rome and was banished probably to Gaul with his wife Herodias, where he later died.

Religious Context of Jesus

The Jewish people were monotheistic whereas the surrounding cultures were mostly polytheistic. The Sabbath Day was a very important part of Jewish religious life. It was considered to be a day of rest and worship. Another major religious function of the Jewish year was the Passover feast celebrating the deliverance of the Jewish people from their slavery

in Egypt. Many Jews would travel to Jerusalem in order to celebrate in the holy city. Jesus and his disciples too had their last supper during this time. As a religious community, Jewish society had few important religious leaders:

1) High Priest

Two prominent religious figures were Annas and Caiaphas. Annas was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, and although Caiaphas was the official high priest of Israel, Annas who had been the former high priest still held power and authority. It was Caiaphas who tore his clothes and declared Jesus worthy of death.

2) Scribes

“Scribes” (basically means students of the scriptures) were important religious leaders too. They were men whose primary occupation was writing out copies of the Jewish Scriptures and teaching the people what the law said. During the time of Jesus they were the law keepers – the teachers (*Rabbi*) of the law. They were, also trusted as lawyers within Jewish society. Since they interpreted the law, they gained lot of respect among the Jewish community. Interesting to note that the scribes were some of Jesus’ most adamant opponents. For them Jesus did not match up with the Messiah of the Old Testament.

3) Pharisees

The Pharisees were religious leaders who were known for their religious orthodoxy and strict observance of the Jewish laws, ceremonies and traditions. There were around 6,000 Pharisees during Jesus’ time on earth. They were leaders in the local synagogue.

The Pharisees openly opposed Jesus. They were particularly appalled at his acts of healing people on the Sabbath and his blatant claims to divinity.

Jesus denounced them as being hypocrites. They often lived moral lives, full of good deeds, but it was all outward actions with no thought given to the heart or motives of the actions. However, Jesus indeed took notice of their pursuit of righteousness. He said, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).

4) Sadducees

The Sadducees were Jewish religious leaders who were primarily from the upper-class, were much more sympathetic to the Romans and sought

to maintain their aristocratic positions in society. They often disagreed with the Pharisees because the Sadducees rejected the oral traditions and much of the doctrine of the Pharisees especially resurrection of the dead.

The Sadducees were opposed to Jesus because there was the supposed threat that Jesus could potentially overthrow the Roman government, thus jeopardizing their positions of prestige. Sadducees lived primarily in Jerusalem and their lives were often focused around the happenings of the Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

The Sanhedrin (the judicial council of the Jewish people) was comprised primarily of Sadducees.

5) Essenes

Essenes were members of a religious sect or brotherhood that flourished in Palestine between 2nd century BCE and 1st century CE. Ironically, the New Testament does not mention them. The Essenes clustered in monastic communities that, generally at least, excluded women. Property was held in common and all details of daily life were regulated by officials. The Essenes were never numerous; Pliny puts their number at some 4,000 in his day.¹⁵ Like the Pharisees, the Essenes meticulously observed the Law of Moses, the Sabbath, and ritual purity. They also professed belief in immortality and divine punishment for sin. But, unlike the Pharisees, the Essenes denied the resurrection of the body and refused to immerse themselves in public life. With few exceptions, they shunned Temple worship and were content to live ascetic lives of manual labour in seclusion. The Sabbath was reserved for day-long prayer and meditation on the Torah (first five books of the Bible). Oaths were frowned upon, but once taken they could not be rescinded. Qualified members were called upon to swear piety to God, justice towards others, hatred of falsehood, love of truth, and faithful observance of all other tenets of the Essene sect. It is today accepted that the Qumrân community was Essenian.

6) Zealots

They were member of a Jewish sect known for its uncompromising opposition to pagan Rome and the polytheism it professed. They were an aggressive political party whose concern for the national and religious life of the Jewish people led them to despise even Jews who sought peace and conciliation with the Roman authorities. Extremists among the Zealots turned to terrorism and assassination and became known as *Sicarii* (Greek *sikarioi*, “dagger men”). They frequented public places

with hidden daggers to strike down persons friendly to Rome. In the first revolt against Rome (66–70 CE) the Zealots played a leading role, and at Masada in 73 CE they committed suicide rather than surrender the fortress. Interestingly one of Jesus' disciples is called Simon the Zealot.¹⁶

Economic Context of Jesus

There were interregional movement and trade as well as a thriving export industry especially of Galilean wares. The political realities and the material remains make free movement between Jews and Gentiles in the north quite plausible for the period of Jesus' life.¹⁷ It was the time of rise of monetary economy rather than barter system.

Heavy taxes were levied by Herod Antipas. His personal allowance was 200 talents (around 444,000 bushels of wheat). This was collected as a land tax. More taxes were collected if any public projects were built. In addition to this, there were also customs, tolls, and sales taxes on goods transported from one district to another.

Peasants had a dreadful time in Galilee and Judea. Farming during the period of Jesus was basically of a subsistence character and did not provide for surpluses from year to year.¹⁸

Under the foreign rule the Jews of Palestine were saddled with a double burden – Roman taxes and the Jewish tithe (matter of divine law therefore, mandatory). Probably the combined level of Jewish and Roman taxes may have reached as high as 35 percent, which would have been a crushing burden within a subsistence economy.¹⁹ Probably the double tax burden helped to swell the ranks of non-observant Jews.²⁰

Social banditry²¹ was endemic in the whole of Palestine. Freyne suggests that the threatened agricultural strike would seem to indicate that banditry was the direct outcome of scarcity in production and an inability to pay tribute.²²

End Notes

- ¹ He ruled from 14-37 CE as the emperor of Rome.
- ² Cf. Luke 3:1.
- ³ He ruled Judea from 26-36 CE.
- ⁴ Catholic Encyclopedia, "Pontius Pilate" <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/12083c.htm> (accessed November 11, 2012).
- ⁵ The incident of Pilate mixing the blood of some Galileans with their sacrifice shows the cruel nature of the man (Luke 13:1).
- ⁶ Cf. Stephen L. Harris, *Understanding the Bible*, Eighth ed. (Colombus: McGraw-Hill Companies, 2010).
- ⁷ Encyclopedia, "Pontius Pilate".

- ⁸ E. P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Press, 1995), 87-88.
- ⁹ Matthew. 14:3-4; Mark 6:17-18; Luke 3:19.
- ¹⁰ Matthew 14:6-11; Mark 6:19-28.
- ¹¹ Matthew 14:1-2; Mark 6:14-16; cf. Luke 9:7-9.
- ¹² Luke 13:31-33.
- ¹³ Luke 23:5-12.
- ¹⁴ Robin Lane Fox, *The Unauthorized Version: Truth and Fiction in the Bible* (London: Viking, 1991), 297.
- ¹⁵ "Essenes", <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/193097/Essene> (accessed June 16, 2013).
- ¹⁶ Today many would suggest that Simon was not part of this Jewish sect because it came into existence late. Cf. Robert Eisenman, *James the Brother of Jesus: The Key to Unlocking the Secrets of Early Christianity and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (London: Viking Penguin, 1997), 33-4; John P. Meier, *Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1991), 132-35.
- ¹⁷ Michael J. McClymond, *Familiar Stranger: An Introduction to Jesus of Nazareth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan / Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 48.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 49.
- ¹⁹ Frederick C. Grant, *The Economic Background of the Gospels* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1973 [1926]), 105.
- ²⁰ Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 85.
- ²¹ A spontaneous outburst of resentment against the ruling class.
- ²² Sean Freyne, "The Geography, Politics, and Economics of Galilee and the Quest for the Historical Jesus," in *Studying the Historical Jesus: Evaluations of the State of Current Research*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 95.

CHAPTER III

New Testament Titles of Jesus

It is to the Bible one turns to know more about the person and work of Jesus the Christ. And there is a plurality of images/metaphors of Jesus in the Bible. Here an attempt is made to understand these New Testament titles of Jesus.

Christos/Mashiach (Christ/Messiah)

The word literally means – ‘anointed one.’ It had no special religious meaning in the Greek culture, however in the Old Testament it had a special religious connotation.

Old Testament

Anointment with oil was a way of setting apart people for fulfilling the divinely ordained office in the theocracy. Three offices were anointed: priests (Lev. 4:3; 6:22), kings (I Sam. 24:10; II Sam. 19:21; 23:1; Lam. 4:20), and prophets (I Kings 19:16). This anointing indicated divine appointment to the theocratic office concerned and therefore indicated that by virtue of the unction the anointed persons belonged to a special circle of the servants of God and that their persons were sacred and inviolable (I Chron. 16:22).¹ The most outstanding messianic use of Messiah is found in the Old Testament in Psalm 2:2. The coming king is both God's Son and the anointed one who will rule on behalf of God and over all the earth.

The most notable Old Testament messianic prophecies are found in Isaiah 9 and 11. He is notably not called the messiah but he is a king of David's line who will be supernaturally endowed and will purge the earth of wickedness, and reign with justice (cf. 11:4).

In the Gospels

The messianic expectation (carried on from the Judaic tradition) was quite rampant among the people during Jesus' time (Jn. 1:20, 41; 4:29;

7:31; Lk. 3:15). He was to be a son of David (Mt. 21:9; 22:42), and while he would be born in Bethlehem (Jn. 7:40-42; Mt. 2:5), there was a tradition that he would suddenly appear among the people from an obscure origin (Jn. 7:26-27). When the messiah appeared, he would remain forever (Jn. 12:34).²

The visit by the Magi at his birth is interpreted in a similar fashion. Herod was alarmed (cf. Mt. 2:1-18). The Pharisees, scribes, and leaders of Jerusalem interpreted the popularity of Jesus in terms of political messianism. They thought it would stir up a movement that would disturb the tranquillity of the Roman Empire and it would be crushed (Jn. 11:47-48). A mighty leader who would overthrow Rome is precisely what the people desired of their messiah.³ At the zenith of his popularity, his followers thought of him in similar fashion (cf. Jn. 6:15). Ladd rightly says,

Had it been Jesus' purpose to offer to the Jews such an earthly, political Davidic kingdom, they would have accepted it on the spot and have been willing to follow him to death if need be to see the inauguration of such a kingdom. However, when Jesus refused this and indicated that his mission was of an entirely different character and this his Kingdom was to be a spiritual Kingdom in which men [*sic*] were to eat his flesh and drink his blood, the crowds turned against him and his popularity waned (Jn. 6:66). They wanted a king to deliver them from Rome, not a saviour to redeem them from their sins.⁴

At his trial too Jesus was accused of being a political messiah (Lk. 23:2) by the Jewish leaders. However, the Roman rulers found it very amusing because he looked anything but a threat to the Roman rule. They called him “the so-called Christ” (Mt. 27:17, 22). On the cross, the scribes, and priests mocked him as the king of Israel (Mk. 15:32).

The word *Christos* was used mostly as a title not as a proper name. Even the disciples never addressed Jesus as the messiah. He made no overt claim to be Messiah, yet he did not reject messiahship when it was attributed to him; and before the Sanhedrin, when directly accused of claiming messiahship, he assented, but gave his own definition to the term. He claimed himself to be a heavenly Messiah. He is the King of Peace.

Christos is used 530 times in the New Testament. 383 times it is in Pauline writings.⁵ Christ is Paul's favourite title for Jesus and it also points to the fact that it became an important vocabulary during the early Christianity. For Paul, it is both a name and a title: Christ Jesus, Jesus Christ, and the Lord Jesus Christ – Rom. 9:5. He connects Christ to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus the Christ (Rom. 6:6-7; 1 Cor.

15; Gal. 3:13).

It was a political title – a political liberator. Jesus did not identify himself with the political expectations of his followers. William Wrede, calls it “messianic secret” because Jesus never allowed his followers to describe him Messiah. Victorious Messiah was the people’s expectation; the crucified Messiah was a stumbling block (1 Cor. 1:23). Jesus is the Messiah but not in the mode of a political liberator or like the Zealots or other nationalistic leaders.

1 Pet. 1:11 – connects Christ with suffering. Therefore, early Christians understood crucifixion as a messianic event.

Why is this title important?

- To relate Jesus to Israel as the fulfilment of the classic Jewish expectations.
- To show the continuity between Christianity and Judaism.
- For a better Jewish-Christian relation today.

Son of God

To think the title ‘Son of God’ referring to the divinity of Jesus the Christ and ‘Son of Man’ to the humanity are exegetically inaccurate.

In the Old Testament it can mean - “belonging to God.” Israel as the people of God (Exo. 4:22), Davidic dynasty that were to rule (2 Sam. 7:14) were called son of God. The concept of sonship carries various meanings: commissioning to special work, obedience, intimate fellowship, knowledge, likeness, receiving of blessing and gifts. Old Testament doesn’t point to a messianic figure who is accorded with the title Son of God.

It is used 124 times in the New Testament, mostly in Pauline literature and Hebrews. Paul declares that Jesus is “Son of God” on account of his resurrection (Rom. 1:4).

Jesus used it rarely, but the gospel writers argue that he was sure of his divine sonship and he saw his mission from that perspective (Mat. 11:27; Mk. 12:6; 13:32; Lk. 10:22). His sonship can be explained in the following three propositions:

- He claimed personal intimacy with the Father – used *abba* (Aramaic ‘daddy’) (Mk. 13:36).
- Obedient to the will of God (Mk. 36).
- Uniqueness of his status. Paul uses two distinct Greek words *tekna* – children; *huios* – Son.

Some feminist theologians have raised concern about the sexist usage of Son. Son was a cultural usage of the time. Only a Son could inherit the rights. Therefore, the exclusive language is retained.

From the Christological perspective this title is an important one for the following reasons:

- It points towards the human-God relationship.
- Filial relationship between the Father and the Son.

Son of David

The Old Testament looked forward to a king who would be from the line of David (Jer. 23:5; 33:15). In post-Christian Judaism, “Son of David” occurs frequently as a title of the Messiah. Matthew on several occasions recognizes Jesus as the Son of David (Mt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30). Since his targeted audience were the Jews so the relevance of the title Son of David. Mark uses only once (10:47). Romans 1:3 clearly states that he was “descended from David according to the flesh.” In the controversy (Mk. 12:35-37), Jesus is accusing the scribal experts of an inadequate understanding of the Messiah. He is indeed David’s Son; but this is not enough. David wrote, “The Lord said to my Lord [the messianic King], sit at my right hand.” How can the Messiah be David’s Son if he is also David’s Lord? It is here we see his position on messianic secret. His supernatural origin is made visible here.

As a Christological title, Son of David points to Jesus as the royal Messiah in the line of David. Jesus, in his person and ministry, fulfils the promises of God given to the Davidic dynasty. However, it is perfectly evident that he refused to be a political king. He was the Suffering Servant. Son of David as a title for Jesus is used only eleven times in the New Testament.

Son of Man

Theologically it is a very significant title. Three important aspects of the title:

1. Son of Man was Jesus’ favourite way of designating himself. It is the only title he freely used.
2. The title is never used by anyone other than Jesus.
3. There is no evidence in Acts or the epistles that the early church called Jesus the Son of Man.

Around 65 times the title is found in the gospels. Surprisingly, it never became an important title for Jesus even though Jesus preferred it. The

early church Fathers referred it to portray the humanity of Jesus. They were not fully correct in doing so.

Lord

Septuagint uses *kyrios* for God in the Old Testament. It became the early Christian confession - 'Jesus is Lord' (Rom. 10:9). Jewish historian Josephus mentions that the Jews refused to call the emperor Lord.

Paul uses it without any particular explanation, assuming that his readers are familiar with it. Paul equates Jesus as the Lord to the Old Testament Yahweh (Rom. 10:13; Joel 2:32). He uses it in formula form: Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 1:4), "our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1), "the Lord Jesus" (Rom. 14:14). Rom. 14:6 portrays Jesus as the Lord – a designation.

It is a context specific title. Paul uses it in different contexts: to encourage and admonish believers (Rom. 14:1-12), in eschatological passages (1 Thess. 4:15-17), and in liturgical contexts that highlight the worship life (1 Cor. 11:20).

End Notes

- ¹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 136.
- ² Ibid., 139.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Ibid., 139-40.
- ⁵ 270 times in the authentic letters of Paul: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonian, Philemon.

CHAPTER IV

Christological Debates During the Patristic Period

Classical Affirmations of the Person of Jesus Christ

Jesus is fully human

New Testament portrays Jesus as a concrete human being in no uncertain terms except in doing sin (alienation from and hostility to the grace of God). He was limited and finite and did everything. As a first century Jew, he was influenced by his surroundings especially by the culture and religious heritage of his people. He grew and matured physically, intellectually, spiritually. He was an itinerant preacher with no home. He experienced hunger, thirst. He was pained at the loss of dear ones. He was tempted. He was rejected, insulted, betrayed, humiliated, tortured and finally crucified.

His real humanity is rejection of Docetists who were embarrassed by it. Docetism comes from the Greek word *dokeô*, 'to seem' or 'to appear.' According to them, Christ was fully divine, but his humanity was merely an appearance. He did not really suffer or die. Some even contended that Jesus never left footprints and never blinked his eyes. Docetism was related to Gnosticism. Gnosticism created a dualism between matter and spirit. It regarded spirit as higher and purer part of creation whereas matter represented frailty and even sinfulness. Gregory of Nazianzus said, "That which he has not assumed, he has not healed."¹ If he is not fully human then what he said and did cannot be saving event for us. We remain then without deliverance and without hope. His fully humanity is the precondition of the inclusiveness of his salvation.²

Jesus' humanity is a new humanity. Migliore writes,

The intimacy of his relation with God and his solidarity with sinners and the oppressed are unique and shocking. He is the human being radically free from God's coming kingdom and therefore radically free for communion with and service to the

neighbour. ... [He] extends the welcoming love of God to those who are thought least deserving of it (Luke 15:11ff.). Thus when Christians call Jesus fully human, the claim is not simply that he is a human being but that he is the norm and promise of a new humanity in relation to God and to others.³

Jesus is fully divine.

New Testament affirms that: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). It means that what Jesus does and suffers is also the doing and suffering of God. He is God preaching to us. His forgiveness of sinners is not just the pardon of a human being; it is also God's forgiveness expressed and embodied in this human being. He is Emmanuel – the God with us. His passion and death for us is not just the martyrdom of another innocent victim in an unjust world; it is also God's suffering, God's taking death into the being of God and there overcoming it for our salvation.⁴ His resurrection is not the victory of a solitary human being over death; it is God's victory over sin and death for us all in raising up of this man Jesus.

Jesus' godship or lordship is to be understood in a radical way. Chalcedonian Christology speaks of his divinity in an abstract manner that is not in line with the gospel narrative. It describes the coming of God's Word, or God's Son, in the actions and sufferings of a servant who humbles himself and becomes obedient even to the death on a cross (Phil. 2:5ff.). The gospel story unexpectedly redefines the meaning of true divinity and genuine lordship by depicting the actions and sufferings of a humble servant who gives his life unconditionally for the renewal of the world.

Mystery of the unity of his person.

Classical Christological formulations affirm the two natures (divine and human) of Christ are 'hypostatically' united in one person without confusion, change, division, or separation. How are these united in one? How can two subjects be perfectly united? How can there be two agents of the same act? Baillie has rightly pointed out that it is a paradox. However, this can be analogically explained from our Christian experience. At the heart of Christian existence is the experience of divine grace that precedes and enables human freedom. In every age Christians have testified that we are most truly human, most fully ourselves, most profoundly free when we live in response to God's grace. Divine grace and human freedom are not mutually exclusive.⁵ "Human nature, at the contact of God, does not disappear; on the contrary, it becomes fully human."⁶

Richard calls this unity, the 'kenotic unity' of God and humanity in Christ.⁷ In Jesus Christ, God and humanity are united in mutual self-giving love. It is a union of the Spirit in which there is reciprocal self-limitation and total openness of each to the other. It is neither confused (monophysitism) nor separated (Nestorianism).

Irenaeus (c. 120/140 CE – c. 200/203 CE)

The first two centuries were the most formative for Christian theological development.⁸ This era witnessed the shaping of doctrines in the midst of controversies. Second century is distinct in the study of Christian theology as it is a rough marker of a significant change.⁹ It had to do with the more urgent and fundamental tasks of defining the scope and limits of what Christianity itself was to become. Christian writers in this period had to face much more challenge from external forces than the No one set out the 'primitive Christian Kerygma' of the Christian message in written form more clearly than did Irenaeus, who was bishop in Lugdunum (Lyons) after the persecution of 177 C.E.¹⁰ He is the first systematic theologian of the Christian church.¹¹ He was from Asia Minor, where at Smyrna he had listened to the teachings of Polycarp, who himself was a disciple of Apostle John. Irenaeus' teachings were influential and to a great extent dominated the Christian West.

He has two major works which survives: *Against Heresies* (*Adversus Haereses*¹²) a form of theosophy survives in fragments, but a Latin translation from about 380 C.E., is complete. He called it *The Refutation and the Overthrow of the Knowledge Falsely So Called*. His another work *Demonstration of Apostolic Preaching* or *Proof of Apostolic Preaching*, known in a sixth century Armenian translation since 1907 is "a compendium of theology."¹³

Irenaeus' anti-heretic polemics are well known especially his *Against Heresies*. His main concern was to unmask the Gnostic myths as absurdities and to affirm the corporeal reality of Jesus' birth, career, death and resurrection against the denial that anything material can be of God.¹⁴

Irenaeus presents a catalogue containing various groups and sects whom he calls "Falsely so Called" in the first volume of his *Adversus Haereses*.¹⁵ Its impact on the subsequent work against the heresies has been quite extraordinary and unrivalled. Several of Irenaeus' uses of the designation *gnostikos* are more ambiguous, and it is not very clear whether he is indicating the specific sects again or using "Gnostics" now merely as a shorthand reference for virtually all of the groups he is opposing.¹⁶

His Christology emerges out of his confrontation with 'heretics.' "The feud with Gnostic faith helps Irenaeus formulate his Christology."¹⁷ His Christology was not metaphysical but as Baillie writes, Irenaeus' attempt to find the divine in Jesus is not linked to a metaphysical basis but is an attempt to correlate the redemptive love of Jesus and the nature of God.¹⁸

On account of his knowledge of both heresy and heresiology, Irenaeus seemed to have been well equipped to speak out against the 'gnosis falsely called-so.' One comment is valid here, even though he had Greek background to speculate but he restrained from doing so.¹⁹ There was something more constructive and creative in Irenaeus' speaking out. He wrote at a time when heretic or orthodox polarization does not seem to have been clear.²⁰ There was no clear-cut demarcation between the contending parties. The Gnostics were Christians and they had easy access to the believers. What Irenaeus achieved, at least in the West, was not only the intended refutation, but the lasting polarization of Christian fronts.²¹

Irenaeus accuses the Gnostics of ignoring the 'hypothesis of truth,' the substance of Christian faith. Philip Hefner has pointed out how crucial this concept of 'hypothesis' is to Irenaeus' refutation of the Gnostics. It comprises of God's redemptive dispensation on human's behalf. This is the foremost authority and all others are subordinate to it: scripture, tradition, church, bishop, creed and revelation.²² It is 'that there is one God, creator of the world, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and author of the economy.'²³

Irenaeus accuses the Gnostics of substituting the 'hypothesis of faith' with their own hypothesis which they 'dreamt into existence'²⁴ and is a subtraction from the 'hypothesis of faith.' He especially gets annoyed with the Valentinians and charges them of blasphemy because they introduce division into God; it splits the divine and breaks its unity.²⁵

For him the gospels were the main resource for his Christology. He opposed the Docetics. He rejected Marcion (he rejected the God of the Hebrew scripture as the one who created evil and humanity, also the dualism of evil and good; and two Christs-heavenly and earthly) and maintained that God is God of love and He was known through Jesus Christ.

He used Logos (the Hebrew notion) as the communication of God, though not quite equal to God. It was through the Logos that God entered creation and history from the beginning, always wanting to share Self with all of creation. The incarnation, is the climax of creation summing up, or 'recapitulates' what God had intended for the world all along: the

union of the divine and the human. In Christ a new humanity begun and through this humanity sin is overcome. He is credited with the origin of incarnational theology.²⁶

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 CE – c. 215 CE)

Titus Flavius Clemens' (popularly known as Clement of Alexandria) date of birth is not known (some suggests it was around 150 CE) and he died about the year 215 CE. He was a Greek philosopher (Platonism) who later converted to Christianity and became a theologian and head of the catechetical school of Alexandria.

Clement has had no notable influence on the course of theology beyond his personal influence on the young Origen. Clement has in fact been dwarfed in history by the towering grandeur of the great Origen, who succeeded him at Alexandria. Down to the seventeenth century he was venerated as a saint. His name was to be found in the martyrologies, and his feast fell on the fourth of December. Some of his doctrines were, if not erroneous, at least suspect. He lacks technical precision and makes no pretence to orderly exposition. It is easy, therefore, to misjudge him. In more recent times there is a renewed interest in his teachings and writings especially his claims of philosophy. He was exceptionally well-read. He had a thorough knowledge of the whole range of Biblical and Christian literature, of orthodox and heretical works. He was fond of letters also, and had a fine knowledge of the pagan poets and philosophers; he loved to quote them, too, and has thus preserved a number of fragments of lost works. The mass of facts and citations collected by him and pieced together in his writings is in fact unexampled in antiquity, though it is not unlikely that he drew at times upon the florilegia, or anthologies, exhibiting choice passages of literature.²⁷

Clement taught that God was revealed to the philosophers as well as to the prophets. Every revelation comes through Logos, which in time became incarnate in Jesus the Christ. This Word "clothed in human flesh," reveals God to human being.

His Platonic emphasis rendered Jesus' humanity vague and his emphasis on the teaching of the Word, rather than on the person and life of Jesus would become later the foundational emphasis of the Alexandrian school on the divinity of Christ.²⁸

He says that the Logos "has come to us from heaven"; the Lord has "entered into", or "attached" Himself to, human flesh. In becoming incarnate and so making Himself visible, He has begotten Himself that is, created His own humanity. So Christ is both human and divine, "alone both, God and man". He has "clothed Himself with a man", being "God in

the form of man, unsullied", and as such, He has really suffered.

Clement taught the Godhead in three terms. Some critics doubt whether he distinguished them as Persons, but a careful reading of him proves that he did. The Second Term of the Trinity is the Word. He merely drew a distinction between the Father's Divine immanent attribute of intelligence and the Personal Word Who is the Son. The Son is eternally begotten, and has the very attributes of the Father. They are but one God. So far, in fact, does Clement push this notion of unity as to seem to approach Modalism. And yet, so loose a writer is he that elsewhere are found disquieting traces of the very opposite error of Subordinationism. He acknowledges two natures in Christ. Christ is the Man-God, who profits us both as God and as man. Clement evidently regards Christ as one Person — the Word. Instances of the interchange of idioms are frequent in his writings. Photius (c.820-c.895 CE) has accused Clement of Docetism. Clement, however, clearly admits in Christ a real body, but he thought this body is exempted from the common needs of life, as eating and drinking, and the soul of Christ exempt from the movement of the passions, of joy, and of sadness.²⁹ He defended the reality of the incarnation and he attributed a human soul or mind to the God-man. Some like Photius found problem with his positions especially the way he allowed it to be coloured by the Greek ascetical ideal of *apatheia*, or emancipation from passion. Clement was convinced that the Lord must have been exempt from all desires, both those necessary for maintaining the body and those peculiar to the soul, since His constitution was sustained by "divine power". His view seems to have been that the directive principle (in Stoic language, *to hegemonikon*), which was the ground of His organic unity, was the Logos. He it was Who in effect was Christ's "inner man". On this assumption, since Christ's human soul was a mere copy of the divine Word, it is difficult to see what practical part Clement can have envisaged it as playing. Soteriologically considered, the humanity of Jesus had little theological importance in his scheme.³⁰

Spirit's Christology

Clement illustrates a widespread phenomenon in early Christian thought, namely the lack of distinction between "Logos" and "Spirit." He uses "Logos" and "*Pneuma*" interchangeably. He ascribes the divine acts of creation, preservation, and revelation to the "Name," "Son," "Saviour," or "Logos" (*Strom.* 5:6). In his theological idiom he identifies "Spirit" with Logos.

Clement affirms the perfect identity between the *Paraclete* who is at work in the Church, and the *Paraclete* who was active in the prophets.

Implicit here is the identification of this *Paraclete* with the Logos, because he had affirmed that it was the Logos who worked in the prophets. The *Paraclete*, functions as a technical term in Clement's description of how the Logos transforms the perfect souls towards godlikeness.³¹

In his Spirit Christology one can find at least three determining factors: First, similarly to earlier writers, Clement deploys an all-encompassing theory of the Logos, and thereby inevitably claims for the Logos certain areas of activity traditionally associated with the Holy Spirit, namely the inspiration of Scripture and the charismatic empowerment of the believer. Second, Clement follows the Philonic model of "translating" Scriptural terms and images into philosophical concepts, and "explains" the Biblical *Pneuma* in light of philosophical "Logos." Thirdly, the term *Dunamis* seems to facilitate this tendency, insofar as Clement uses it alternatively for the Logos and the Spirit. There is a clear blurring of distinction between the Logos and the *Pneuma* in him. However, there is no ontological identification.³²

Origen of Alexandria (c. 185 - c. 254 CE)

Origen was an Anti-Nicean Church Father. Some would argue that he was the most scholarly man in the early Church between Paul and Augustine. He succeeded Clement at the School of Alexandria. He is well-known for his treatise on theology: *On First Principles* which probably was the first Systematic Theology.³³ His Alexandrian background defined his stand on Christology. Human nature of Jesus is understood in the Hypostatic Union as generic human nature. His Christology is better known as *Logos* Christology.

Origen was the one who brought *Logos* Christology to its fullest development. He applied Platonic thoughts to the questions about Jesus, and used the *Logos* to describe Jesus as mediator between God humans. He taught that God was completely transcendent, so the divine cannot mingle with flesh. The divine then must be mediated through the soul, and therefore the soul is the point of contact for the *Logos*. In the incarnation, the human soul of Christ was united with the *Logos*. This closeness between human and divine is the way for Christ's human soul to share in the properties of the *Logos*. He explains this union with the help of a metaphor:

[T]he metal iron is capable of cold and heat. If, then, a mass of iron be kept constantly in the fire, receiving the heat through all its pores and veins, and the fire being continuous and the iron never removed from it, it become wholly converted into the latter; could we at all say of this, which is by nature a mass of iron, that when placed in the fire, and incessantly burning, it was at any

time capable of admitting cold? On the contrary, because it is more consistent with truth, do we not rather say, what we often see happening in furnaces, that it has become wholly fire, seeing nothing but fire is visible in it? And if any one were to attempt to touch or handle it, he would experience the action not of iron, but of fire. In this way, then, that soul which, like an iron in the fire, has been perpetually placed in the Word, and perpetually in the Wisdom, and perpetually in God, is God in all that it does, feels, and understands, and therefore can be called neither convertible nor mutable, inasmuch as, being incessantly heated, it possessed immutability from its union with the Word of God.³⁴

This union between *Logos* and Jesus makes him true God. However, to maintain the primacy of God the Father, he taught the principle of *autotheos* which means God only and alone is God. He believed that the Father had begotten the Son by an eternal act; therefore, Christ existed from eternity. Using John 1:1 he argues that there were two begettings of the Son: one in time (the virgin birth) and one in eternity by the Father. Over the centuries *Logos* Christology became a very significant way of interpreting Christ's incarnation.

One finds a problem with Origen's position: it looks as if he is saying that the divinity was in the soul of Jesus, not in his body? Also his *Logos* had a lower degree of divinity than the Father.

Arius (c. 250- 336 CE)

Arius was a Libyan Christian priest at Alexandria. He was well-known for his ascetical, and moral teachings among his community. He attracted many to his teachings especially about the absolute oneness of the divinity as the highest perfect being. His theological teachings came to be known as Arianism where he affirmed the finite nature of Christ and was denounced by the early church as a major heresy at the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE.

Kärkkäinen rightly writes, "We do not know for sure what Arius taught and therefore are dependent on the writings of his opponents."³⁵ A saying attributed to Arius summarizes his thesis about the origin of Christ: "There was [a time] when he was not." The fundamental premise of his system is the affirmation of the absolute uniqueness and transcendence of God, the unoriginate source (*agennetos arche*) of all reality. Since God is unique, transcendent and indivisible, the being or essence (*ousia*) of the Godhead cannot be shared or communicated. For God to impart His substance to some other being, however exalted, would imply that He is divisible (*diairetos*) and subject to change (*treptos*), which is inconceivable. Moreover, if any other being were to participate in the divine nature in any valid sense, there would result a duality of divine

beings, where the Godhead is by definition unique. Therefore whatever else exists must have come into existence, not by any communication of God's being, but by an act of creation on His part, that is, must have been called into existence out of nothing. Of course God is God the Father. Arius appealed to Scripture, quoting verses such as John 14:28: "the Father is greater than I" and also Colossians 1:15: "the firstborn of all creation." Thus, Arius insisted that the Father's Divinity was greater than the Son's, and that the Son was under God the Father, and not co-equal or co-eternal with Him. What then is the relation of the Son or the Word to God, to the Father? Arius, given his view of God, logically concluded the following four things about this relation:

- a. The Son or the Word of God must be a creature, *ktisma* or *poiema*.
- b. As a creature the Son or the Word must have had a beginning.
- c. The Son can have no communion with, and indeed no direct knowledge of, His Father.
- d. The Son must be liable to change and even sin (*treptos; alloiotes*).

The net result of this teaching was to reduce the Word to a demigod; even if infinitely transcended all other creatures, He Himself was no more than a creature in relation to God, the Father. Arius tried to secure the divinity of Jesus in regards to other human beings. At the same time, this position did not make Jesus equal to the Father. In a sense, Jesus was in the middle. The controversy came to be expressed by two Greek words: *homoousias*, the Son is of the **same** essence as the Father, and *homoiousias*, the Son is of **similar** essence as the Father. The Nicene creedal formula, saying that Son is *homoousias* with the Father, became the orthodox view, and Arianism was condemned by the Council of Nicaea in 325 CE. Arius was exiled to Illyricum along with supporters. However, the victory of his opponents short-lived. He returned back and a compromising formula was negotiated but before that could happen, he died.³⁶

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 296 – 298 CE)

There are doubts about his birth date (c. 296-298 CE). He died in 373 CE. He was a short, dark (sometimes called "the Black Dwarf") and a poor man from a Coptic family in Egypt. He went on to become the bishop of Alexandria (for over four decades). He was also a renowned theologian, Church Father and an able apologist. He is particularly known for his conflict with Arius and Arianism. A staunch Alexandrian, he held to the full divinity of the Word. God alone saves, and the purpose of the

incarnation was to save humanity. His famous slogan was: “God became human so the human might become God.” His well-known Christological treatise is *On the Incarnation*.

The starting point of his Christology is evidently John 1:1. It is of the Word-flesh type. He writes, “The Logos has become man, and has not just entered into a man.” His Christology has a very soteriological emphasis. He writes, “We ourselves were the motive of His incarnation; it was for our salvation that He loved man to the point of being born and of appearing in a human body.” It is interesting to note how he explains the process of incarnation. According to him, Christ took flesh. He fashioned a body for himself in the Virgin’s womb. Logos is the governing principle to understand incarnation. It (?) is the animating principle, and the rational soul of human. Logos in Christ is both the integral part of him as well as the moving and animating force off his body.

How can divine suffer (on the Cross)? He answered by distinguishing between the Word in itself, where there is no suffering, and the Word in Jesus’ body, where there is suffering. In this view, however, the Word seems to replace the human soul of Jesus and he is portrayed more as a heavenly man than a truly human being.³⁷

Council of Nicaea (325 CE)

About 250 bishops (majority of them were from the East) were summoned by Emperor Constantine at Nicaea (present-day Isnik in Turkey). Arius and his followers were condemned and an official creed was formulated. It reads,

We believe in One God the Father Almighty, Maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God, Begotten, not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things were made.

Imperial authority was used to settle doctrinal issue. Church became part of the ‘kingdom’ something different from the kingdom of God preached by Jesus.

There was an over reliance on Greek philosophy than on scripture. This led to a more ‘high Christology.’

Apollinarius of Laodicea (c. 310 – c. 390 CE)

He is also known as Apollinarius “the Younger” (c.310-c.390 CE). He was particularly peeved with the increasing spreading of the belief that in Christ the Logos assumed human nature in its entirety. In that case, he thought that Logos would be contaminated by the weakness of human

nature. And Jesus’ sinless nature cannot be maintained. Apollinarius being a pious, orthodox theologian cannot maintain such a position, so he suggested, that if a real human mind in Jesus were replaced by a purely divine mind, only then could Christ’s sinlessness can be maintained. He maintained that Christ had a human body and a human sensitive soul, but no human rational mind, the Divine Logos took over the latter.

His teachings gave rise to what came to be known as Apollinarianism. His Christological position rendered Christ’s human nature incomplete. It compromised Jesus’ role as the Saviour. His position was to obviate the Arian position, but ended up proposing a similar position like his opponent. Apollinarianism was condemned at the Council of Constantinople, 381 CE.

Cappadocian Fathers

These were a remarkable group of philosophically minded theologians from Cappadocia—Basil of Caesarea also known as Basil the Great (330-379 CE), his younger brother Gregory of Nyssa (c.332-395 CE), and his lifelong friend Gregory of Nazianzus (329-389 CE). Quasten says, Basil was the “man of action,” Gregory of Nazianzus “the orator,” and Gregory of Nyssa “the thinker.”³⁸ They were instrumental in development of the early doctrine of Christian theology especially the doctrine of the Trinity. They were also responsible in making substantial defence against Arianism and Apollinarianism.

As evident (probably expected too), Arianism did not disappear from the early church. At Nicaea it was asserted that the Son was of the same substance (*homoousios*) as the Father. Even among the Arians there were two views: some believed/taught that the Son is of like substance with the Father and others who were more radical believed that the Son cannot be like the Father (in terms of essence), because he is created, therefore, he cannot be God. By using the formula of “one substance (*ousia*) in three persons (*hypostaseis*)” the Cappadocian Fathers presented their Christology.

Gregory of Nazianzus teaches about Logos that He bore the flesh, and conjoins Himself with an intelligent soul for humanity’s sake, and became human except being sinful. He argues that there are “two natures (*duo phuseis*) concurring in unity” in the God-human, and He is “twofold (*diploous*),” “not two, but one from two”; and of course there are not “two Sons.” His two natures are distinguishable in thought, and can be referred to as “the one (*allo*)” and the “the other (*allo*)”, but there are not two Persons (*allos kai allos*); rather “they form a unity (*hen*) by their

commingling, God having become human and human God.” Gregory states that the two natures “have been substantially (*kat’ ousian*) conjoined and knit together.” For him, the Lord’s rational soul provides the meeting-place for them (two natures); because of His natural affinity to the soul, the Word can “mingle” with it. It should be noted here that Gregory was not able to explain the finitude of Jesus’ human nature especially his ‘ignorance’ of certain things.

Gregory of Nyssa opines that the God-head had entered into the humanhood, so that Jesus could be called “the God-receiving human (*theodochos anthrospos*).” God tabernacled in Jesus. The Holy Spirit at the incarnation first prepared a body and soul as a special receptacle (*oikeion skeuos*) for the divinity, and the heavenly Son then “mingled Himself” with them, the divine nature thereby becoming “present in them both.” Thus “God came to be in human nature.” But how would explain this union. Gregory of Nyssa would say that it is mysterious as one thinks of the union of body and soul in a human being. In this “mingling” (*anakrases*) the flesh was passive, the Logos is active, element, and a transformation of the human nature into the divine was initiated. But in the historical Jesus, the characteristics of the two natures remained distinguishable. His Christology becomes problematic when he argues that when Christ endured suffering or other human experiences, it was not His divinity which endured them, but “the human attached by the union to the divinity;” they belonged “to the human part of Christ.” For him, the Godhead is impassible, therefore, it cannot be affected by these human frailties. However, in Jesus, the divinity through its concrete oneness with the humanity indirectly participated in its limitations and weaknesses. Gregory recognized Jesus’ real humanity but it was prevailed by the divinity ultimately.

Comparatively very little is found of Basil’s³⁹ Christology. It is, however, well known that he advocated the Nicene position against Arianism. For him Godhead is perceived as three particular ‘personhoods’ that share the same essence. He sees the exalted position of Christ to the ‘right hand of the Father’ as ‘a relationship of coequality’ to the Father. Christ therefore, is divine and equal in divinity to the other Persons in the Trinity. Christ is the power of God, the wisdom of God, the image of the invisible God, and the brightness of God’s glory.

For Basil, the divinity of the Son is an essential aspect for human salvation. This happens through the process of *theosis*, or deification in Jesus, whereby, “God has become human in order that humankind should become gods.” Incarnation is the uniting principle in the Godhead, and also creates the access point between God and humankind.

For Basil, Christology is ecclesially embedded in the worship, liturgy, preaching of the Word, and the Sacraments. The real presence of Christ is located in the church, and in the liturgical practice of worship and participation in the Sacraments.

The most important ‘heresies’ to be confronted by the fifth century church known as **Nestorianism**. Its proponent was Nestorius who became bishop of Constantinople in 428. An Antiochene he was strongly opposed to Apollinarianism’s diminution of Christ’s humanity. He was opposed to the inappropriate usage of the title *theotokos* (‘God-bearer’ or ‘Mother of God’) for the Blessed Virgin Mary, and from this the conclusion was drawn that he denied that Christ was God and regarded him merely as a human. He preferred to use the term ‘Christ-bearer’ as the best solution to this problem. Studies on Nestorius have shown that he has been misrepresented by his opponents in many issues on the person of Jesus Christ.⁴⁰ His Antiochene emphasis made him to affirm the completeness and distinction of the two natures and their union in one person. He was vehemently opposed by **Cyril of Alexandria**⁴¹ (c.150-c.215 CE). He was the Patriarch of Alexandria. His Christological formulation was Alexandrian in nature. Nestorius’ position on *theotokos* provoked him. He found it to be a doing away with the full reality of the incarnation. He raised a fundamental question against the Nestorian position: “What is that lay on the altar? The body of a human or the life-giving power of the Incarnate Christ?” Cyril’s main concern was not the relation of the two natures in Christ, but rather the identity and the unity of the Word before and after the incarnation.⁴² For him there are two modes of existence of the God-human: pre-existence and incarnation, but it is one and the same Word that exists in these two modes. Godhead and humanity are united in the one God-human. He emphasized that both the divinity and humanity are ‘hypostatically’ united, not just ‘conjoined.’⁴³ And each of the elements in his being “remains and is perceived in its natural property.”⁴⁴

Ephesus 431 CE

At Ephesus Nestorius was excommunicated and condemned by Cyril with the help of Caelestin bishop of Rome. This controversy sullied the image of Christianity very much.⁴⁵

The only positive achievement of this council was that it canonized the Nicene Creed as enshrining the core of Christological orthodoxy. However, the Council of Ephesus could not solve the problem of unity of person in Jesus Christ. Aftermath of Ephesus was murkier than ever before. So, attempts were made for reconciliation. An important accord

was reached between the Alexandrians and Antiochenes in 433 C.E. called the Symbol of Union. Cyril for his part denied any change or confusion of the two natures, while the Antiochenes reluctantly abandoned Nestorius. Cyril's favourite expressions, such as "one nature" and "hypostatic union" were left out, and there was explicit mention of a duality of natures in the union. *Theotokos* was admitted, and there was no mention of a "conjunction" of the natures.⁴⁶

Towards Chalcedon 451 CE

Even after the arguments, counter arguments, councils and counter councils the core issue remained still the bone of contention.⁴⁷ Alexandrians thought Cyril conceded too much to the Antiochenes; the Antiochenes felt very unhappy about the abandonment of Nestorius. Serious clash between the two warring faction was precipitated by **Eutyches** (c. 378-454). A pro-Alexandrian, he gave a new twist to the Alexandrian insistence on the unity of Christ by teaching that in the incarnate Christ there are no longer two natures but one. This is the doctrine of 'monophysitism' the doctrine that in Christ there is only a divine, not a human, nature.⁴⁸ It was also almost fully Docetic.⁴⁹ Eutyches was condemned in the general council. The unexpected death of Emperor Theodosius II in 450 C.E. gave the upper hand to the "two-nature" group. They called for a new council at **Chalcedon** in 451. Some 500 bishops, majority of them from East attended this council. An interesting comment is valid here. The main concern of the council was the Empire's unity, so a resolution of the Christological controversies had to be found and imposed once and for all.⁵⁰ So, Christological formulation was also a political tool to foster unity of the Empire. Initially there were differences but later the council settled for a creed.⁵¹

The church fathers thought that by formulating a creed they could find a solution to the 'absolute paradox' of the divine and human in the person of Jesus Christ. But it is a known fact then even a great council like this could not solve the problem. Chalcedon is an important milestone⁵² in the church's progress towards a deeper understanding of Jesus Christ.

Council of Chalcedon (451 CE)

The Council tried to resolve the Christological controversies between Alexandrians and Antiochenes. However, they tried, but could not reach a permanent settlement. But it was able to combat some major 'heresies' like Nestorianism and Eutychianism.

The Creed reads as follows:

We, then, following the holy Fathers, all with one consent, teach people to confess one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in Godhead and also perfect in manhood; truly God and truly man, of a reasonable [rational] soul and body; consubstantial [co-essential] with the Father according to the Godhead, and consubstantial with us according to the Manhood; in all things like unto us, without sin; begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead, and in these latter days, for us and for our salvation, born of the Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, according to the Manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, to be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and concurring in one Person and one Subsistence (hypostasis), not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son, and only begotten God, the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ; as the prophets from the beginning [have declared] concerning Him, and the Lord Jesus Christ Himself has taught us, and the Creed of the holy Fathers has handed down to us.

End Notes

- ¹ *Christology of the Later Fathers*, 218.
- ² Daniel L. Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology* (Michigan, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 146.
- ³ *Ibid.*, 146-147.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, 148.
- ⁵ D. M. Baillie, *God Was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), 106-32.
- ⁶ John Meyendorff, *Christ in Eastern Christian Thought* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1987), 64.
- ⁷ *Kenosis* (emptying) is the action of free self-limitation and free self-expenditure. Cf. Lucien J. Richard, *A Kenotic Christology* (Lanham, MD.: University Press of America, 1982).
- ⁸ For a detailed essay on Christological developments in the first five centuries refer to Samuel George, "The Emergence of Christology in the Early Church: a Methodological Survey with Particular Reference to the Anti-Heretical Polemics of Irenaeus of Lyons," *Asia Journal of Theology* 24, no. 2 (October 2010): 219-231.
- ⁹ Arland J. Hultgren and Steven A. Haggmark, eds., *The Earliest Christian Heretics. Readings from Their Opponents* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 2.
- ¹⁰ Eric Osborn, "Irenaeus of Lyons," in *The First Christian Theologians. An Introduction to Theology in the Early Church*, ed. G. R. Evans (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2004; reprint, 2005), 120.

- ¹¹ Robert F. Brown, "On the Necessary Imperfection of Creation: Irenaeus' Adversus Haereses IV, 38," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 28, no. 1 (1975): 17.
- ¹² This title was given by Eusebius (EH3.23.3) cf. John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea*, Formation of Christian Theology, vol. 1 (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), note no. 4, 112.
- ¹³ Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching*, trans., Joseph P. Smith, Ancient Christian Writers, vol. 16 (New York: Newman Press, 1952), 19.
- ¹⁴ Gerard S. Sloyan, *The Crucifixion of Jesus. History, Myth, Faith* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 80.
- ¹⁵ Valentinians (Valentinus, Ptolemy, Secundus, Marcus), Simon of Samaria, Menander, Saturnil, Basilides, Carpocrates, Marcellina, Cerinthus, Ebionites, Nicolaitans, Credo, Marcion, Encratites – Tatian, Barbelo, Ophites, Cainites. Michael Allen Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism" An Argument for Dismantling A Dubious Category*, Second ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 34.
- ¹⁶ Two views on the way Irenaeus' understanding of Gnostics is valid here. Norbert Brox suggests that it is a general label for all heretics. On the other hand Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau argue that Irenaeus uses *gnostikos* in two senses: a) meaning "learned" b) with reference to adherents of the specific sect called "the Gnostic heresy" in *Adv. Haer* 1.11.1. Why Irenaeus puts them all under the same category? One can say that it is merely the category of "false teaching" rather than a grouping defined by a list of phenomenological traits. For him the common determining factor in all of them is their deficiency with respect to Truth. His primary object was not to show what "Gnosticism" is, but what "heresy" is. Ibid., 33-37, 44-45.
- ¹⁷ Samuel Laeuchli, *The Language of Faith* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1962), 17.
- ¹⁸ Baillie, *God Was in Christ: An Essay on Incarnation and Atonement*, 70.
- ¹⁹ It is interesting to note that some maintain that Irenaeus was interested in presenting a Christ who is revealed in the biblical revelation rather than any abstract philosophical one. Cf. Irwin W. Reist, "The Christology of Irenaeus," *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 13, no. 4 (Fall 1970): 241-251.
- ²⁰ H. J. Carpenter, "Popular Christianity and the Theologians in the Early Christianity," *Journal of Theological Studies* XIV, no. 2 (October, 1963): 297.
- ²¹ Gerard Vallee, *A Study in Anti-Gnostic Polemics: Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius* (Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), 11; *ibid.*
- ²² For a detailed understanding of Irenaeus' 'hypothesis of faith' refer to Philip Hefner, "St. Irenaeus and the Hypothesis of Faith," *Dialog* 2, no. 4 (Fall 1963): 300-306.
- ²³ Irenaeus, *Against the Heresies -I*, trans., Dominic J. Unger, Ancient Christian Writers, vol. 55 (New York: Paulist Press, 1992). 1.10.1. Hereafter *Adv. Haer.*
- ²⁴ *Adv. Haer.* 1.9.3.
- ²⁵ Philip Schaff, "The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus", Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.html> (accessed 10, July 2006); *ibid.* 2.28.2. Also Vallee, *A Study in Anti-Gnostic Polemics: Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanius*, 19.
- ²⁶ Brennan R. Hill, *Jesus the Christ: Contemporary Perspectives*, New ed. (New London, Connecticut: Twenty-Third Publications, 2006), 224-25.
- ²⁷ <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04045a.htm> (accessed June 04, 2013).
- ²⁸ For a detailed work on Clement's Christology refer to Oleh Kindiy, *Christos Didaskalos: The Christology of Clement of Alexandria* (Germany: VDM Verlag

- Dr. Mueller, 2008).
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*
- ³⁰ "Christology", <http://fromdeathtolife.org/chistory/christ1a.html> (accessed June 04, 2013).
- ³¹ Bogdan G. Bucur, "Revisiting Christian Oeyen: "The Other Clement" on Father, Son, and the Angelomorphic Spirit," *Vigiliae Christianae* 61 (2007): 388-9.
- ³² *Ibid.*
- ³³ Two good works on Origen: Ronald E. Heine, *Origen: Scholarship in the Service of the Church*, Christian Theology in Context (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Joseph W. Trigg, *Origen*, The Early Church Fathers (London: Routledge, 1998).
- ³⁴ Origen, *On First Principles* Book II Section 6.
- ³⁵ Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 69.
- ³⁶ There are controversies about the nature of his death. The Orthodox Christians asserted that his death was a consequence of his heretical views. However, today some alleges that he might have been poisoned by his opponents. Cf. Charles Freeman, *The Closing of the Western Mind: The Rise of Faith and the Fall of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 2002); Jonathan Kirsch, *God Against the Gods: The History of the War Between Monotheism and Polytheism* (New York: Viking Compass).
- ³⁷ Hill, *Jesus the Christ: Contemporary Perspectives*, 229.
- ³⁸ Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, vol. III (Texas: Christian Classics, 1962), 204, 36, 54.
- ³⁹ A good piece about Basil Christology refer to Michael Gibson, "The God Who Has Citizenship Among Us: Toward a Retrieval of the Christology of Saint Basil of Casaerea" http://www.academia.edu/1400583/The_God_Who_Has_Citizenship_Among_Us_Toward_a_Retrieval_of_the_Christology_of_Saint_Basil_of_Casaerea (accessed June 09, 2013).
- ⁴⁰ F. Nau (ed.), *Le livre d'Heraclide de Damas*, Paris 1910 and F. Loofs, (ed.), *Nestoriana*, Halle 1905, also S. Cave, *The Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, Duckworth, 1925, quoted in Macquarrie, 162.
- ⁴¹ Summary of Cyril's Christology is found in a letter written by him to Nestorius which has 12 points. (a) Mary is *theotokos*, 'for she bore after the manner of flesh the God-Logos made flesh,' (b) the Word is united 'hypostatically' to the flesh, (c) there are no separation of hypostasis after the union and they are brought together in a natural union, (d) the fourth denies the property of distinguishing the statements made about Christ, as if some properly applied to the Word and others to man, (e) the description 'God-inspired man' is repudiated on the ground that Christ is very God, the Word having become flesh and sharing our flesh and blood, (f) it is wrong to say that the Divine Word is Christ's God or Lord, and not rather that after the incarnation He is simultaneously God and man, (g) he denies that Jesus as man was moved by the Word or clothed in His glory, as if there were a distinction between Him and the Word, (h) he condemns those who speak of 'the man assumed' as deserving to be worshipped along with the Word incarnate, and designated God along with Him, for that suggests a separation; Immanuel is the Word incarnate, and one indivisible worship is owing to Him, (i) the Holy Spirit is his own, (j) our high priest is not a man distinct from the Word, but the incarnate Word himself, (k) Lord's flesh is the very flesh of the Word, possessing in

consequence quickening power, (I) the Word really suffered, was crucified and died in His flesh. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958), 324-325.

⁴² At first glance his views look similar to the Apollinarianism which stresses the unity of Christ with the Word.

⁴³ George Sabra, "The Christological Controversies of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," *Bangalore Theological Forum* XXXII, no. 1 (June, 2002): 82.

⁴⁴ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 321.

⁴⁵ Both Cyril and Nestorius tried to enlist the support of the ecclesiastical and political higher ups to gain upper hand in the ongoing controversy of the interpretation of Jesus Christ. Emperor Theodosius II (408-450) summoned a general council to meet at Ephesus on June 7, 431. Cyril held a synod at Alexandria and sent a letter containing a list of twelve anathemas (refer to footnote no. 107) appended to it, which was required to be accepted by Nestorius. These could not be accepted even by moderate Antiochene. At the council Cyril and his allies came in time. Taking the advantage of delayed arrival of the Oriental (Antiochene) bishops he convened the synod and condemned Nestorius because majority of the bishops with him (he could gather 197 signatures against Nestorius); the Virgin Mary was officially proclaimed as the *theotokos*. When the Oriental bishops arrived they held their own council and condemned Cyril and his supporters. But he could gather only 43 signatures. The emperor earlier deposed both Cyril and Nestorius, but Cyril later managed to rehabilitate himself. *Ibid.*, 326-327. Also Sabra, "The Christological Controversies of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," 82-83.

⁴⁶ Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 329-330. Also Sabra, "The Christological Controversies of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," 83.

⁴⁷ George, "The Emergence of Christology in the Early Church: a Methodological Survey with Particular Reference to the Anti-Heretical Polemics of Irenaeus of Lyons," 80.

⁴⁸ John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1990), 164. This is contested by many. V. C. Samuel says the term 'Monophysite' does not have a history that goes back to the 5th century. It is fairly a modern term. Cf. V. C. Samuel, "The Christological Controversy and the Division of the Church," in *Orthodox Identity in India. Essays in honour of V. C. Samuel*, ed. M. K. Kuriakose (Bangalore: Rev. Dr. V. C. Samuel 75th Birthday Celebration Committee, 1988), 127-128.

⁴⁹ Sabra, "The Christological Controversies of the Fourth and Fifth Centuries," 84.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ In agreement, therefore, with the holy fathers, we all unanimously teach that we should confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is one and the same Son, the same perfect in Godhead and the same perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, the same of a rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father in Godhead, and the same consubstantial with us in manhood, like us in all things except sin; begotten from the Father before the ages as regards His Godhead, and in the last days, the same, because of us and because of our salvation begotten from the Virgin Mary, the *Theotokos*, as regards His manhood; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without

separation, the difference of natures being by no means removed because of the union, but the property of each nature being preserved and coalescing in one *prosopon* and one *hupostasis*-not parted or divided into two *prosopa*, but one and the same Son, only-begotten, divine Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the prophets of old and Jesus Christ Himself have taught us about Him and the creed of our fathers has handed down. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 339-340.

⁵² Even though Chalcedon marks a turning-point in the history of Christian theological thought, the church had to pay a heavy price in the East Christendom when they rejected these formulations. Some of their objections were that the imperial power in Constantinople (i.e., political) and the Church of Rome (i.e., ecclesiastical) enforced its position on the unwilling adherents of Christians in the East. The most central objection raised by them was regarding the Chalcedon's sanction of the phrase 'two natures after the union' by putting the expression 'made known in two natures' with reference to the Christ. Cf. V. C. Samuel, *The Council of Chalcedon Re-examined. A Historical and Theological Survey* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2001), 187ff.

CHAPTER V

*Mediaeval and Reformation Christologies***Thomas Aquinas**

Aquinas (1224/5/6-1274) is accorded with so many titles like Doctor Cummunis, Doctor Angelicus, Dominican Philosopher, Theologian etc. His father Landulf d'Aquino was a baron of Emperor Frederick II and his mother Theodora also came from an aristocratic lineage. At the age of five he was sent to Benedictine Abbey of Monte Casino in expectation that he would become an abbot of the monastery. In 1239 he moved to University of Naples, where he was attracted to the newly founded Dominican Order. After his reception in the Order he was sent to Paris (to avoid his family's objection). He was confined to his family castle for two agonizing years for becoming a Dominican. After his release he began his theological studies in the Dominican priory of St. Jacques in the University of Paris. Here he was influenced by St. Albertus Magnus.

During his stay in Paris he wrote *De Ente et Essentia*. In 1256 he wrote *Contra Impugnantes Dei Cultus* as a defence of mendicant order against the secular attacks. The same year he became the Master of Theology and later Regent Master of St. Jacques. Here he wrote *Questiones Disputate de Veritate*. Here he also began composing his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, a treatise for the use of Dominican missionaries in their dealings with non-Christians.

In 1261 he was in Orvieto where he wrote *Contra Errors Graecorum*, and *Cantra Aurea*, and also a literal exposition of the book of Job. In 1265 he was sent to Rome, where he began writing his magnum opus *Summa Theologiae* as a handbook for friars. In 1268 he moved back to Paris and taught at the University of Paris till 1272. Here he encountered friction with the orthodox theologians and secularists over the use of Aristotelian philosophy in theology. During this period he held disputation on various issues one of it was on whether the union in Christ was one of nature or of person. By 1272 he was back in Naples where he continued to write *Summa's* third part.

On 6th December 1273 while saying Mass, he underwent some mysterious traumatic experience, which abruptly ended his teaching and writing. He said about it, "Everything I have written seem like straw by comparison with what I have seen and what has been revealed to me." On 7th March 1274 he died while he was on the way to second Council of Lyons, at Cistercian abbey of Fossanuova, where he was buried.

Christology in its simplest definition means the study about the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is questionable whether Aquinas agreed to such a definition of Christology. But one thing is very clear in his writings that Jesus Christ was his chief concern of study. Probably he provided the first systematic Christology that consistently resolved a number of the existing issues.¹ His Christology is indebted to his teaching on God considered as Creator and Trinity. He takes him to be the point at which divinity and humanity come closest to each other. Jesus Christ is both truly human and truly divine for Aquinas.²

Aquinas' deals Christology very systematically. One may question his logic of explaining the person and work of Jesus Christ in the Third Part of the *Summa Theologica*. Should not Christology be the foundation of any theological formulations? Chenu makes an interesting comment: "if this embarrasses you, then you will find Aquinas embarrassing."³ Aquinas retained for his entire work a pattern of process, a process that flows from God and includes human beings moving toward the *eschaton*.

His Christology follows the Aristotelian pattern of nature grounding actions, treats first the subject of the union, the Word in Jesus of Nazareth; the Incarnation then leads into the psychology and activities of the prophet who was to be the universal saviour; and third, the events in Jesus' life are presented.⁴ For him Jesus was not a miraculous display of divinity but the visible witness, the teacher, and the exemplar of the mission of the Word, a clear influence of Aristotle.

Chalcedon is his starting point of Christology. He is orthodox in his teaching about Christ from that point of view. He accepts without qualification the doctrine of incarnation laid down by the Council of Chalcedon.⁵ It is noted that Thomas as teacher summarized the principle conclusions about Christ offered by the Christian traditions in theology that preceded him, especially that of the patristic age.⁶ Christ for him is one logical subject of whom divine and human attributes can be truly predicated without equivocation. For him Christ is both human and divine and in this understanding there is no question of myth, symbol, metaphor or anything else which might be taken to imply that Christ is not both what God is by nature and what people are by nature. Nor is there any

question of belief in Christ's divinity and humanity being just an expression of human values.⁷

For Aquinas Christ is the starting point. Everything he has to say about Christ is an attempt to explore the sense and significance of what he takes to be teaching of Chalcedon. For him therefore, belief in Christ's humanity and divinity is on a par with belief in the doctrine of Trinity. It is matter of faith.⁸ Aquinas maintained that the doctrine of Incarnation stemmed from the teaching of Christ.⁹ To the biblical quotation about Christ as the author and perfecter of our faith Aquinas takes it to mean that the divinity of Christ was taught by Christ himself.

Aquinas presumes that the New Testament gives us a substantially accurate account of the life and teaching of Christ. Christ is presented in the New Testament as laying claim to divinity and as acting as God was supposed to act. He presumes that the picture of Jesus portrayed in New Testament is substantially correct.

Another important point of his understanding of Christ is that his Christology is to be understood within the salvation history.¹⁰ The reason being the primary motive for the Incarnation for him was to remit and remedy sins. Incarnation is insistently connected with soteriology.¹¹ Incarnation is geared to human salvation, it is thus most appropriate for the Son to assume human nature he opined.¹² It is a Christology 'from above'.¹³

Martin Luther

Luther (1483-1546) was a German theologian, an Augustinian monk, an ecclesiastical reformer, and a seminal figure of the Reformation in the 16th century. He studied at the University of Erfurt and in 1505 decided to join a monastic order, becoming an Augustinian friar. He was ordained in 1507, began teaching at the University of Wittenberg and in 1512 was made a doctor of Theology. During his visit to Rome in 1510, he was appalled by the corruption he found there. In response, on 31st October 1517, he published his '95 Theses', attacking papal abuses and the sale of indulgences. In January 1521, the Pope Leo X excommunicated him. In 1534, he published a complete translation of the Bible into German, underlining his belief that people should be able to read it in their own language.

Did Luther had a Christology? This depends on what is meant by the word "Christology." If we understand it as a completely elaborated doctrine of Christ, we will not find such a thing in Luther's work. Aside from some Christological disputations, Luther never wrote a tract on Christology.¹⁴ Statements about the significance of Jesus Christ are

spread throughout his work.¹⁵ Ernst Wolf writes that it is better to say "Christology *with* Luther" rather than about "Christology *of* Luther."¹⁶

Even a cursory reading of Luther would make it clear that Jesus Christ was central to his theological thought. He writes in his *Large Commentary on Galatians*:

In my heart that one article reigns, i.e. the faith in Jesus Christ, from which, by which and to which all my theological ideas are going out and are returning, though I realize not having understood more than fragments of the height, breadth and depth of this wisdom and having reached no more than a weak and defective beginning.¹⁷

The uniqueness of Luther's Christology is the interplay between Christology and Soteriology. All what he said about Jesus Christ has soteriological relevance, and salvation is only found in Jesus Christ.¹⁸ He was not interested in Jesus Christ as a "private person," but only in Him as a "public person," regarding what He has done for my/our good is of prime importance to him, not the person of Jesus.

Luther from the start stood by the historical expressions of the church in the creeds and the Christological work of the fathers heading toward Chalcedon. He had no difficulty in accepting the traditional creeds of the church concerning Christology, but uniquely placed a heavy emphasis on "Johannine characteristics" (humanity). Luther at times appears to comingle the two natures. Luther adopts the traditional dogmatic doctrine of the two natures. In agreement with it he teaches the full unity of the deity and the humanity in the person of Jesus Christ, the full participation of the humanity in the deity and of the deity in the humanity. "God has suffered; a man created heaven and earth; a man died; God who is from all eternity died; the boy who nurses at the breast of the Virgin Mary is the creator of all things."

How could he maintain the true humanity of Christ under these circumstances? He teaches that Jesus Christ, according to his human nature, also possessed the attributes of the divine majesty, that is, that even the child Jesus was omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent."

It is remarkable that Luther, by emphatically stressing the humanity as well as the divinity of Christ, actually reunited the old Antiochene and Alexandrian traditions. It is, however, more remarkable that Luther, in spite of the tensions this combination brought about, always insisted on the inseparable union of God and man in Jesus Christ. Luther emphasized this union to the utmost even when it seems hardly bearable for "decent" theology. Here one could refer to Luther's allusions to a pre-existent union of God with humanity as He was already present in the

womb of Mary, and even to a crucifixion from eternity.¹⁹

When looking through the eyes of Luther, what kind of Christ does one see? One can highlight some of the ways Luther emphasized Christ at various times during his life and reform efforts. Initially, Luther's Christ was no friend but rather the judge enthroned on the rainbow with a levelling sword and consuming fire—not arbitrary or unfair, just all too righteous for Luther's eternal good.²⁰ He also found Christ regularly in the Old Testament. Christ stands in front of Moses in the burning bush – incarnation. Divinity was right in front of him (in Christ), though hidden in humanity-God in the bush prompted this thinking.²¹

John Calvin

Calvin (1509-1564) was a French Protestant Reformation theologian. His influence in the theological realm led to Calvinism. He is well-known for his magnum opus: *The Institute of the Christian Religion* (1536). Protestant theology owes a lot to this tireless polemic and apologetic. His adherence to the Reformation platform of *sola Christi* commits him to a certain Christocentrism in his theology, at least on a material if not a formal level.²²

Calvin's Christology has been the subject of intense interest and debate, both in the Reformation era and in the twentieth century. His rejection of the Lutheran use of the *communicatio idiomatum*,²³ which was developed to undergird an understanding of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, led to the charge that he had a Nestorian Christology which did not sufficiently address the unity of God and humanity in Jesus Christ and the subsequent glorification of his humanity in its hypostatic union with the eternal Son of God.²⁴

Calvin's doctrine of the *communicatio idiomatum* allows for the preservation of the purity of Christ's divine nature amidst his involvement in the depravity of human nature in ways which make Calvin's Christology so unique. He affirms both the divinity and humanity of Christ 'so joined and united . . . that each retains its distinctive nature unimpaired, and yet these two natures constitute one Christ' (*Institute*, II.xiv.1). He avoids the error of Nestorius by positing a real union of the natures (consonant with that proposed by the Council at Ephesus). He also avoids the opposite error of Eutyches by positing the enduring distinction between the two natures such that they do not blend or co-mingle (consonant to the rules laid down at the Councils of Constantinople and Chalcedon (*Institute*, II.xiv.4). he uses the term 'hypostatic union' in the sense of demarcating the constitution of one person from two natures.

Calvin asserts that the second person of the Trinity existed prior to

the incarnation as the 'Son of God'. The enfleshment of the eternal Son resulted, not in the creation of a second god, but of his also becoming the 'Son of Man' (*Institute*, II.xiv.6). He is Son, therefore, according to both natures;²⁵ and, contrary to the errors of Servetus, his eternal Sonship is not dependent upon his earthly Sonship (*Institute*, II.xiii.4). In that his being called 'Son of God' results from his relationship to his heavenly Father and his being called 'Son of Man' results from his being of the lineage of King David, this 'makes a distinction between the two natures' (*Institute*, II.xiv.6).

It should be noted that Calvin's discussion of the *communicatio* does not operate on the ontological level.²⁶ He discusses the *communicatio* within his hermeneutical discussion of New Testament texts regarding the person and nature(s) of Christ. He refers to the *communicatio* as a 'figure of speech'²⁷ whereby: 'They sometimes attribute to Him what must be referred solely to His humanity, sometimes what belongs uniquely to His divinity; and sometimes what embraces both natures but fits neither alone' (*Institute*, II.xiv.1).

Calvin maintains that Jesus Christ is the image of the invisible God, the one true representation of God the Father. As such, Jesus Christ both takes from us every evil thing we have and bestows upon us every good thing we lack, through the wonderful exchange.²⁸ By focussing on Jesus Christ as the image of God in the wonderful exchange, Calvin can unite several aspects of the person and work of Christ—the incarnation of the Son of God, his anointing by the Spirit as the Christ, and his obedience to the Father—into a unified presentation of Christ and his significance for us. And in the process, he can demonstrate, against the Lutheran criticism of his Christology, that he does emphasize the unity of the person of Jesus as the basis of the wonderful exchange and the glorification of his humanity as its result, and yet precisely on that basis reject the Lutheran conception of the communication of properties. He also uses the theme of Jesus Christ as the image of God to unite the way we come to know God the Creator with the way we know God the Redeemer—through the awareness of the powers of God depicted in the works of God in the world—thereby freeing the interpretation of his theology from a false dichotomy.²⁹

End Notes

- ¹ Etienne Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of Saint Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 502.
- ² For a detailed study of Aquinas' Christology refer to Samuel George, "The Hypostatic Union of Jesus Christ in the Writings of Thomas Aquinas: An

- Enquiry," *Bangalore Theological Forum* XL, no. 1 (June 2008): 118-48; Corey L. Barnes, *Christ's Two Wills in Scholastic Thought: The Christology of Aquinas and Its Historical Contexts* (Ontario, Canada: Pontifical Institute Mediaeval Studies, 2012).
- ³ M. D. Chenu, *Toward Understanding St. Thomas* (Chicago: Regnery, 1969), 9. Quoted in Thomas Franklin O'Meara, "Thomas Aquinas and Today's Theology," *Theology Today* 55, no. 1 (April 1998): 54.
- ⁴ Thomas F. O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas Theologian* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 128.
- ⁵ He may have been the first scholastic of the Middle Ages to quote the texts of Chalcedon and other early Christian Councils. Cf. James Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas d'Aquino* (Washington DC: 1983), 164 f. quoted in Brian Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 298.
- ⁶ Joseph P. Wawrykow, "Wisdom in the Christology of Thomas Aquinas," in *CHRIST Among the MEDIEVAL DOMINICANS. Representations of Christ in the Texts and Images of the Orders of Preachers*, ed. Kent Emery and Joseph P. Wawrykow (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1998), 186.
- ⁷ But it should also be noted that among the Medieval theologians (whose major interest was in Jesus' being, a divine metaphysical person within a human being) Thomas Aquinas stood out for his interest in Jesus' humanity. He treated questions like the why did messiah choose a lowly state of lie, being a craftsman and a travelling preacher?
- ⁸ Davies, *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, 319.
- ⁹ Ibid., 298-299.
- ¹⁰ O'Meara, *Thomas Aquinas Theologian*, 132.
- ¹¹ Wawrykow, "Wisdom in the Christology of Thomas Aquinas," 183.
- ¹² Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica* (Wheaton: Wheaton College). 3a. 3. 8.
- ¹³ Gerald O'Collins, *Christology. A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 203.
- ¹⁴ A good work on Luther's Christology refer to Marc Lienhard, *Luther, Witness to Jesus Christ: Stages and Themes in the Reformer's Christology*, trans., Edwin H. Robertson (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982). Also Paul Martin Bretscher, "Luther's Christ," *Concordia Theological Monthly* 31, no. 4 (April 1, 1960): 212-14; Vidar L. Haanes, "Christological Themes in Luther's Theology," *Studia Theologica* 60, no. 1 (January 2007): 21-46; Martin Luther and Mitchell Tolpingrud, "Luther's Disputation Concerning the Divinity and Humanity of Christ," *Lutheran Quarterly* 10, no. 2 (June 1, 1996): 151-78.
- ¹⁵ Klaas Zwanepol, "A Human God: Some Remarks on Luther's Christology," *Concordia Journal* 30, no. 1-2 (January 1, 2004): 41.
- ¹⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 42.
- ¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., 44.
- ²⁰ Robert Rosin, "Reformation Christology: Some Luther Starting Points," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 71, no. 2: 152.
- ²¹ Ibid., 154.
- ²² Stephen Edmondson, *Calvin's Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

- Press, 2004), 3.
- ²³ Communication of properties or attributes of one nature to the other.
- ²⁴ Randall C. Zachman, "Jesus Christ as the Image of God in Calvin's Theology," *Calvin Theological Journal* 25, no. 1 (1990): 45.
- ²⁵ Ibid., 52.
- ²⁶ R. Michael Allen, "Calvin's Christ: A Dogmatic Matrix for Discussion of Christ's Human Nature," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 4 (2007): 393.
- ²⁷ Bruce L. McCormack, *For Us and Our Salvation: Incarnation and Atonement in the Reformed Tradition*, Studies in Reformed Theology and History 1.2 (Princeton: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1993), 8. Quoted in Allen, "Calvin's Christ: A Dogmatic Matrix for Discussion of Christ's Human Nature," 393.
- ²⁸ Zachman, "Jesus Christ as the Image of God in Calvin's Theology," 61.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 62.

CHAPTER VI

Doctrines of Atonement

The English word 'atonement' is derived from the word 'at-one-ment,' to make two parties at one, to reconcile two parties one to another. It means essentially reconciliation. In current usage, the phrase, 'to atone for' means the undertaking of a course of action designed to undo the consequences of a wrong act with a view to restoration of relationship broken by the wrong act. This is the meaning which the word 'atonement' carries in biblical context: to speak more precisely, it means the work of Christ culminating at Calvary. The Hebrew root is *Kaphar*- in New Testament *καταλαγναι* 'reconciliation'. The word 'atonement' is not found in the modern English version of the New Testament at all, but the idea is expressed in many ways.

The Bible assumes the need for some kind of atoning action if a person is to be restored to a right and proper relationship with God. It further argues that this restoration is wholly of the sovereign mercy of God, free and undeserved, and that nothing a person is or has can do anything to effect this relationship. The Christ- event enables a person to see that there was no other way to effect atonement, there was no other Person, no alternative means. Something more than forgiveness (as shown in the Old Testament) was at stake- and that was justification- a working relationship. Only the Son of God made flesh could qualify in his righteousness, sinlessness and obedience.

Down the centuries theologians have expressed their opinions to the important question- How did Christ effect this great change in human's relation to God of which Christian life and faith are the evidence? And they have come up with some explanations which are known in the Christian circle as 'theories of atonement.'

Satisfaction/Juridical theory

Satisfaction theories¹ start from the idea that human sin constitutes a grave offense against God, the magnitude of which renders forgiveness

and reconciliation morally impossible unless something is done either to satisfy the demands of justice or to compensate God for the wrong done to him. These theories go on to note that human beings are absolutely incapable on their own of compensating God for the wrong they have done to him, and that the only way for them to satisfy the demands of justice is to suffer death and eternal separation from God. Thus, in order to avoid this fate, they are in dire need of help. Christ, through his death (and, on some versions, through his sinless life as well) has provided that help. The different versions of the satisfaction theory are differentiated by their claims about what sort of help the work of Christ has provided.

This theory was propounded by St. Anselm (1033-1109). He calls it 'debt-cancellation' theory. Sin is 'not to render God his due' and human being has dishonoured God by obeying his enemy Satan. Therefore, human must either be punished or they must make adequate satisfaction to God. Human being's sin is Infinite, and so the satisfaction which God's honour requires is infinite also. Only God can render such satisfaction- and yet human must make it. The only solution was -God himself become human, and in the person of Jesus Christ, the God-Human, should make the full satisfaction, which human must make but only God can make. So God gives himself to Christ, he accepts the satisfaction offered by Christ on the cross- human is free. Christ makes the satisfaction of our behalf.

Penal Substitution theory

This theory was defended by John Calvin and many others in the reformed tradition. According to this theory, the just punishment for sin is death and separation from God. Moreover, on this view, though God strongly desires for us not to receive this punishment it would be unfitting for God simply to waive our punishment. But, as in the case of monetary fines, the punishment can be paid by a willing substitute. Thus, out of love for us, God the Father sent the willing Son to be our substitute and to satisfy the demands of justice on our behalf.

Subject View/Moral Influence theory

It emphasizes the importance of the effect of Christ's cross on the sinner. This view is generally attributed to Peter Abelard (1079-1142), who said that Christ in his death is the manifestation of God's love. He holds that the work of Christ is fundamentally aimed at bringing about moral and spiritual reform in the sinner—a kind of reform that is not fully possible apart from Christ's work. The Son of God became incarnate, on this view,

in order to set this example and thus provide a necessary condition for the moral reform that is, in turn, necessary for the full restoration of the relationship between creature and Creator.

This theory is sometimes called the exemplarism theory. Looking at the cross (greatness of divine love) delivers us from fear and kindles in us an answering love. The sight of the selfless Christ dying for sinners moves us to repentance and faith. We are saved by repentance. The thrust is on 'personal experience.' Both Schleiermacher and Ritschl used this theory. The former said, 'Christ's loving compassion for sinner lift them from the sin and takes them into fellowship with God.' In India Chenchiah and Appasamy were greatly influenced by this theory. Chenchiah said, redemption is affected not by death but by the larger life.... Salvation is not just sinlessness but lifefulness.' For Appasamy cross is the uttermost expression of God's love. It works through its moral influence on human beings rather than by any kind of actual transaction.

End Notes

- ¹ The other being *penal substitution* theory defended by John Calvin and many others in the reformed tradition, and the *penitential substitution* theory, attributed to Thomas Aquinas and defended most recently by Eleonore Stump and Richard Swinburne. Cf. Eleonore Stump, "Atonement According to Aquinas," in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. T.V. Morris (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 61-91; Eleonore Stump, *Aquinas*, Arguments of the Philosophers (London: Routledge, 2003); Richard Swinburne, "The Christian Scheme of Salvation," in *Philosophy and the Christian Faith*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Notre Dame: Notre Dame Press University Press, 1988), 15-30; Richard Swinburne, *Responsibility and Atonement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Stephen Porter, "Swinburnian Atonement and the Doctrine of Penal Substitution," *Faith and Philosophy* 21, no. 2 (April 2004): 228-241.

CHAPTER VII

Western Christologies

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834)

Christology plays a very important role in Schleiermacher's theology. Niebuhr has observed, Schleiermacher's theology is Christo-morphic;¹ and for him the elements of theology are grounded in the person-forming experience of being in relation to Christ and the community founded by him.

The starting point of Schleiermacher's Christology is the certainty of the *experience* of redemption through Christ.² In formulating his Christology, he rejects four major early heresies: Doceticism, Nazareanism, Manicheanism, Pelagianism.

Two conditions are requisites for Jesus being the redeemer. First, he must be *like* us, he must have a nature similar to us. Second, he must not himself stand in need of redemption, and he must have the requisite power to save those that need redemption. As such he must be *unlike* us. Extreme position on either of the above can lead to heresies that were condemned by the Council of Chalcedon of 451. Schleiermacher does not directly cite the issue of two natures as laid down by Chalcedon, but he does maintain that any serious Christology must come to grips with the problems faced by it. His own analysis is concerned to avoid the pitfalls of the one-sided Christologies leading up to the council. The insights of Chalcedon is important for him though he would not use its language. He notes that the word "nature" is used of finite existence having a particular essence, and remarks that even the heathens had realized that it was inapplicable to God insofar as God "is to be thought of as beyond all existence and being" (*CF*, § 96).³ For him speaking of divine *nature* makes very little sense. To think of Jesus as having two distinct natures expressing themselves in one person is analogous to "a formula made up by combining indications out of which it is impossible to construct a figure."⁴

Schleiermacher notes that ever since the language of two natures and one person began to be used, the results,

[h]ave always vacillated between the opposite errors of mixing the two natures to form a third which would be neither of them, neither divine nor human, or of keeping the two natures separate, but either neglecting the unity of the person in order to separate the two natures more distinctly, or, in order to keep firm hold of the unity of the person, disturbing the necessary balance, and making one nature less important than the other and limited by it" (CF, § 96).⁵

He has two positions that are crucial for his resolution of the Christological enigma. First, the essential character of perfect human nature is just to express the divine. Hence there is no real duality between perfect human nature and the divine. Second, human nature only achieves its perfection in Jesus Christ; in fact the creation of human beings is ordered to perfection in and through Jesus Christ.⁶

Schleiermacher's understanding of the work of Christ can be broken down into two key moments. First, Jesus strengthens each individual's God-consciousness, enabling it to dominate each moment of the sensuous self-consciousness. In other words, Jesus awakens the God-consciousness and establishes the dominance of spirit over the flesh. Second, Jesus establishes the kingdom of God. Both moments are interdependent, so that the awakening of the God-consciousness occurs through the establishment of the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God is established through the awakening of the God-consciousness.⁷

Passion of Christ, for Schleiermacher is not some primitive element in redemption and reconciliation. For him, if these are only focused on the suffering then they are "magical caricatures" since they "isolate this climax, leave out the foundation of the corporate life, and regard this as a giving up of Himself to suffering for suffering's sake as the real sum of Christ's redemptive activity" (CF, § 101.3). Rather, his suffering is a result of his having entered the fallenness of humanity. Only in this sense can it be said that "His suffering in this fellowship, if occasioned by sin ... [were] suffered for those with whom He stood in fellowship, that is, for the whole human race" (CF, § 104.4).⁸

For Schleiermacher, Christ's saving work is his inauguration of the kingdom of God which is one of divine love. Jesus is perfectly receptive to this divine love in virtue of his absolute dependence on the Father; he expresses this love in his being born as a human being.

Karl Barth (1886 – 1968)

This Swiss theologian is one of the stalwarts of Protestant Christian

theology of twentieth century.⁹ Ironically, he comes from the liberal protestant school of nineteenth century. In 1914 he had a life changing experience when he found out that his teachers, Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930) and Johann Wilhelm. Herrmann (1846-1922), had endorsed the aggressive militarist policies of Wilhelm II, the German emperor from 1888-1918. Evangelical theology was becoming more humanistic and there was a growing sense of pessimism that progress has slowed down if not stalled. Liberal theology with its over-emphasis on reason was not able to change the dawning pessimism among the Europeans. Sensing the changing perception among people, Barth made the clarion call with his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (first published in 1918 and later thoroughly revised in 1922). It was an affirmation of the Word of God over human efforts at constructing religious meaning. He writes,

God the pure and absolute boundary and beginning of all that we are have and do; God, who is distinguished qualitatively from men [*sic*] and from everything human ... who is never a known thing in the midst of other known things; God, the Lord, the Creator, the Redeemer; - this is the living God. In the Gospel, in the message of Salvation of Jesus Christ, this hidden, living, God has revealed Himself as He is.¹⁰

For Barth theological enterprise begins and ends with Christ Jesus. God is totally Other. There is no contact between humanity and God apart from that which God has created, that is, the person of Jesus Christ. God's freedom meets in Jesus Christ, who establishes the covenant of love that serves as the basis of our salvation.

Jesus Christ for Barth, is the pre-existent Christ as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. It is in and through Trinity one knows the person of Jesus Christ. Trinity is the self-revelation of God-self. "The reality of Jesus Christ is that God Himself in person is actively present in the flesh. God himself in person is the Subject of a real human being and acting."¹¹ Barth would not use the term *person* for Christ as he thinks it modern usage of it confuses the earlier sense. He would rather use 'mode of Being' for Christ in the Holy Trinity.

He would accept Christ's divinity without much difficulty. However, he feels that to maintain the humanity of Jesus is a challenge. He notes that New Testament assumes the genuine humanity of Jesus but it is qualitatively different from other human beings. Since he is God, therefore, he can be human too. But his humanity is different from other humans. He can act both in an absolute and finite manner. God did not cease to be God in the act of incarnation. The Son did not give up being God by becoming human, but at the same time, as human he was not

omnipotent and eternal but limited in time and space. To a great extent Barth borrowed from the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, his theological positioning. Jesus of history is not of very great significance to Barth, because the faith in Christ is not dependent on the earthly details of Jesus.

For Barth, Christ's role is that of a mediator between God and humanity. By virtue of the incarnation, God and humanity are united. In his divinity, Jesus represents God to humankind; in his humanity, Jesus represents humankind to God.¹² There is a covenant created between God and humanity in Christ Jesus where God acts on behalf of humankind through and in him.

Albert Schweitzer (1875 – 1965)

In 1901 at the age of 26 he wrote an important work on the life of Jesus: *Das Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis: Ein Skizze des Lebens Jesu*.¹³ In 1906 he published *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben Jesu Forschung*.¹⁴ He found himself captivated by the problems of the life of Jesus and set about trying to understand them by investigating their history. The outcome was a profound critique of the lives of Jesus and a constructive view of Jesus' ministry.

Schweitzer emphasized the eschatological message of Jesus. For him, the liberal portrait of Jesus was a false modernization. But he believed that it might help in reaching the historical Jesus. He opines that Jesus in his journey—discourse to his disciples was not expecting some natural kingdom in this world, according to the ethicizing interpretations of liberalism, but rather a supernatural kingdom bringing with it the end time. Jesus did not see himself as the messiah but as a forerunner in line with John the Baptist. He only spoke of a future appearance of the Son of Man. He is the eschatological prophet.

Schweitzer was sure that a "life" of Jesus cannot be constructed from the sources that were available about Jesus. Only few information about his last days of his life can be construed, and these can be retrieved only from the gospel of Mark with the help of Matthew.¹⁵ In line with the liberal view about the reliability of the gospel traditions, he too gave preference to the gospel of Mark.

Schweitzer's presentation of the historical Jesus was formed in continual debate with the prevailing pictures of Jesus provided by the liberalism of the time.¹⁶ His method was confrontational, and calculated to destroy (the liberal position about Jesus), what seemed to him, highly erroneous and non-historical. Liberal view about Jesus rested on four assumptions:¹⁷

1. The life of Jesus falls into two contrasting epochs, an earlier, successful period of activity, followed by a retreat to the north, and a second, later journey to Jerusalem characterized by hostility and eventually death;
2. The passion story has been influenced by Pauline atonement theories;
3. The kingdom of God is conceived as an ethical society of service to humanity, a theme that dominates the passion narrative; and
4. The success of the passion depended on the disciples understanding the kingdom in this sense and acting on it; the passion-idea then must have communicated this ethical element.

Schweitzer rejects the prevalent liberal position of two contrasting periods in Jesus' life. He agrees that there were two periods in Jesus' career, but no one can grasp them without supplementing Mark with Matthew. In his view the evidence suggested that the Galilean period in Jesus' life was mixed, success and opposition, but that Jesus in any case held steadfastly from the start to the finish to the expectation of the eschatological kingdom. At his baptism itself, Jesus knew of his eschatological messianic call. His ethic goes along with his eschatology.¹⁸

Jesus sent his disciples out on a mission to proclaim the eschatological kingdom, apparently expecting it to occur before their return (Matt. 10:23). The Son of Man would appear at the end, however, even after the return of the disciples the kingdom did not 'appear.' The success of the disciples in ministry was a sign that the apocalyptic expectation was basically correct, but something more was expected. It is to achieve this something more that Jesus went to north, to Jerusalem. Therefore, the atoning death of Jesus was a messianic necessity. The apocalyptic expectation required that there be a period of "messianic tribulation," before the End.¹⁹ It is in the same line Schweitzer uses the Son of Man sayings of Jesus. The suffering of the Son of Man is the necessity of his mission, laid upon him by the divinely ordained course of apocalyptic events.²⁰

Schweitzer is generally silent about empty tomb stories and resurrection of Jesus. Probably for him these do not belong to the domain of historians. For him the Easter tradition had no special significance. He remarked that the Christian faith stands by the question of Jesus' messianic consciousness. If he did not hold himself to be the messiah, then "this means the death blow to the Christian faith." He opines that if faith in Jesus as messiah only comes from the early church, then Christian

faith has lost its ground, for “the judgment of the early Church is not binding upon us.”²¹ Only what Jesus said is important.

Rudolf Karl Bultmann (1884 – 1976)

He was a contemporary of Karl Barth. He was not a systematic theologian but a New Testament scholar. He maintained that biblical exegesis cannot be divorced from constructive theology.

He was one of the main architects of a then new methodology in biblical studies: Form Criticism.²² He wanted to know the tradition that lay behind the Gospel narratives, which he maintained was shaped by the early Christian community. He concludes that what the Gospels tell about Jesus and his life relates more to the *Sitz im Leben*, life situation, of the early church than to the historical life of Jesus.²³

He was particularly peeved with the many biographies of Christ that were more interested in historical Jesus, because he thought these were not representative of good biblical scholarship.

His major work on Christology is *Jesus* published in 1926. Here he asserts that one can know very little about the person and the life of Jesus, since the New Testament showed very little interest in the details of his life and personality.²⁴ According to him Jesus himself was not very keen in portraying his personality either as a Messiah or Lord. What is important is Christ’s teachings that confronts us with the question of how we should interpret our own existence.²⁵

For him Christ is both an eschatological prophet and a rabbi because of his persistent eschatological messages (Matt. 21:11; Lk. 7:16) and characteristic teaching methods (Matt. 7:2; Lk. 17:7-10). He did not reject Jewish religiosity but overt legalism of the time. For him obedience is not legalism.

Bultmann was particularly attracted to existentialist philosophy of Martin Heidegger (1889-1976). Existentialism focuses on a scrutiny of human existence.²⁶ He creatively used Heidegger’s existentialism to construct his Christology. Kärkkäinen succinctly explains this usage,

In his [Bultmann’s] view, the New Testament recognizes two modes of human existence. The first one is “unbelieving and unredeemed,” what he also calls as inauthentic existence; it is characterized by the delusion of self-sufficiency and adhesion to the visible and transitory world. the other mode of existence is “believing and redeemed,” in other words, authentic. In this mode, humans know that the ... purpose for which humanity was created is not reached by their own efforts but by committing their lives to faith in Christ. This reveals the main difference

between the secular existentialism of Heidegger and the Christian version of Bultmann. For Heidegger, authentic existence is the result of human efforts; for Bultmann, it is dependent on Christ.²⁷

His emphasis on the “now” as the moment of decision allowed him to reinterpret the eschatological message of Jesus in such a way that absolutely everything depends on what we make of each moment of decision for the kingdom.²⁸ He felt that many of the teachings about Jesus are the faith constructions of the early church.²⁹

Later Bultmann tried to understand Jesus through the lens of mythology. It was D. F. Strauss who first used the concept of myth as an important tool to study Bible. For Bultmann, myth is not simply a miracle or a story about a miracle but rather the way in which reality as a whole is conceived. It is a prescientific way of conceptualizing reality. It is a primitive means of objectifying the forces that impinge upon and determine human existence and thus conveys insights concerning it.³⁰

For Bultmann, New Testament portrayal of Jesus is heavily coloured by myths and legends. Labels like vicarious atonement, pre-existent Son of God, virgin birth, empty tomb, resurrection, and the ascension are incomprehensible to the modern mind. He feels that if the New Testament is to retain its legitimacy then it must be radically demythologized. For him, the only true historical event is the Easter faith of the first believers.

Paul Johannes Tillich (1886 – 1965)

His theological method can be best termed as “correlation.” According to him, theology should have a mutual working relationship with philosophy in that philosophy asks the relevant questions, and theology provides the answers from a Christian faith perspective. He writes, “Philosophy formulates the questions implied in human existence, and theology formulates the answers implied in divine self-manifestation under the guidance of the questions implied in human existence.”³¹

Tillich owed a lot to the existential philosophy. It is through this we need to understand his doctrine of God and Jesus Christ. Kärkkäinen opines that Tillich followed Bultmann to extract the existential significance of New Testament Christology. Tillich prefers the term *symbol* instead of *myth* as Bultmann uses.

To understand the Christological formulations of Tillich it is important that we understand his understanding of “being,” “non-being,” and “Being.” For him, the question of being is the basic question of philosophy and theology, and, its counterpart is the question of non-being. For him, the question of non-being raises the question of a power of being that

overcomes the threat of non-being and sustains life. This for him is the "Being Itself/Ground of Being." And this Ground of Being is God. Without this Ground of Being, everything finite would fall back to non-being or nothingness.³²

Jesus, the Christ, the New Being

Tillich's Christology is to be understood from the perspective of his understanding of human "fall" and the quest for salvation. "Fall" for him a universal transition from *essence* to *existence*.³³ It is real in its factual effects but not in literal and factual sense. This estrangement of existence from essence is to be overcome. As the New Being, Christ, is the answer for human being to overcome this predicament.

Tillich opines that Christianity is based on two aspects: the fact of Jesus of Nazareth and the reception of this fact by those who receive him as the Christ. He prefers "Jesus the Christ" not Jesus Christ, which for him, combines two irreconcilable elements: "the fact that which is called Jesus of Nazareth and the reception of this fact by those who received him as the Christ."³⁴ As an existentialist and in line with Bultmannian approach, he rejects any attempt to reconstruct the historical Jesus. For him, the factual, historical Jesus is not the foundation of faith apart from his reception as the Christ. He argues that the liberal reconstructions of the life of Jesus have failed to achieve any credible results. He writes, "... faith cannot even guarantee the factual transformation of reality in that personal life which the New Testament expresses in its picture of Jesus Christ."³⁵ He trusted the New Testament because it is the original source of the New Being. It gives symbols of the New Being. There are three things about Jesus that the New Testament brings forth according to Tillich: (1) the undisrupted unity of his being with God; (2) his serenity to keep this unity against an estranged existence; (3) Jesus' self-surrendering love, even to the point of self-destruction.³⁶

Tillich writes, Jesus, the "New Being is essential being under the conditions of existence, conquering the gap between essence and existence."³⁷ "Jesus as the Christ is the bearer of the New Being in the totality of his being, not in any special expression of it.... His being has the quality of the New Being beyond the split of essential and existential being."³⁸

Tillich was not happy with the conceptual tools used by Nicene and Chalcedonian Christologies. For him, Jesus was not God become human (as the orthodox confessions would explain), but "essential man [*sic*] appearing in a personal life under the conditions of existential

estrangement."³⁹ The subjection of the Christ to estranged existence is symbolized on the Cross, and his conquest is symbolized in the resurrection.⁴⁰

Tillich was particularly peeved by the usage of "nature" by the orthodox Christology for understanding the person of Jesus Christ. When the word "nature" is applied to human beings, it is ambiguous, and, when applied to God, it is wrong.⁴¹ Someone writes,

Human being's nature can mean his/her essential or existential nature; when applied to Jesus, the former meaning is pertinent, for his humanity was never outside his essential unity with God. But in the case of ordinary human beings, the latter meaning applies. As far as God is concerned, He has no nature in the sense of something to which He has to conform so that He can be what He is.⁴²

Tillich writes, "There is no divine nature which could be abstracted from his eternal creativity."⁴³ Jesus was not divine and did not have a divine nature but rather manifested in and through his humanity an entirely new order of being – essential humanity. In Jesus, humanity became "essentialized" within existence. Kärkkäinen writes, "This was a great paradox, a reversal of the necessary human fallenness. This Christology can properly be called 'degree' Christology: Jesus was not different from us in substance but in degree."⁴⁴

Wolfhart Pannenberg (b. 1928)

Perhaps, other than Karl Barth, no one has been more importantly involved in the development of Protestant dogmatic theology than the German theologian Wolfhart Pannenberg. For a long time, he was professor of systematic theology at the University of Munich. His major work on Christology was, *Jesus – God and Man*, was published in German in 1964 and translated into English in 1977.

Pannenberg sees the Son as the principle of difference in the Trinity and so as the generative principle of created reality existing in relative independence from God. However he does not interpret the Son as a logically necessary stage in the history of the Absolute as Hegel explains, but sees the free self-distinction of Jesus from the Father as the *ratio cognoscendi*, the foundation of knowing, of the eternal Sonship of Jesus, and this as the basis for the claim that the corresponding eternal self-distinction of the Son from the Father is the *ratio essendi*, the ground of being, for the existence of creation. The Son is therefore the structural prototype of the destiny of creation to achieve communion with God. And this can only be achieved through the Spirit, who is the principle of communion in the immanent Trinity and so the medium of

the participation of created life in the divine trinitarian life.⁴⁵

Incarnation for him is the realization of God's communion with human destiny. However, human beings can only achieve their destiny in conformity with the self-distinction of the Son from the Father.

Pannenberg develops his Christology "from below" (which he introduced in his path-breaking Christological work: *Jesus – God and Man*) and its relationship to a Christology "from above" in a more comprehensive and coherent manner in the *Systematic Theology*.⁴⁶ In the context of the *Systematic Theology*, which interprets the history and destiny of Jesus as the action of the trinitarian God for the salvation of humankind, Christology "from below" and "from above" are complementary insofar as the former offers a reconstruction of the foundation of the statements the latter develops systematically. The starting point of Christology is, for Pannenberg, the distinctive humanity of Christ in which the destiny of humanity to live in communion with God becomes reality in Jesus' filial relationship to God. Rooted in his self-distinction from the Father by becoming obedient to him, the divinity of Jesus is therefore not a foreign element added to the reality of Jesus' humanity, but the reflection from Jesus' relationship to the Father on his being and on the eternal being of God. The resurrection is in Pannenberg's interpretation the justification of Jesus' claim to filial authority by God the Father and in this way validates Jesus' message. This implies that God is eternally as Jesus proclaimed God to be: God is eternally the Father revealed in the Son and therefore the Son is eternally in relation with the Father and in this sense preexistent.⁴⁷

Schwöbel writes,

In [the] [T]rinitarian framework humanity is conceived to be essentially in relation to God because it is a specific expression of the Son as the generative principle of difference and of created independence. It therefore has the capacity of becoming the medium for expressing the self-distinction of the Son from the Father and so their communion-in-difference. Since living in communion with God is the created destiny of humanity from the beginning, the Incarnation is not an alien intrusion into humanity but the actualization of its destiny. However, this is only possible where the Spirit elevates humanity ecstatically above its finitude and so enables it to accept its finitude and so to become the medium of the expression of the relationship of Father and Son. Conversely, the Incarnation is the self-actualization or self-fulfillment of God in his relationship to the world.⁴⁸

End Notes

- ¹ Cf. Richard R. Niebuhr, *Schleiermacher on Christ and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964).
- ² Jacqueline Mariña, "Christology and Anthropology in Friedrich Schleiermacher," in *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher*, ed. Jacqueline Mariña (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 152.
- ³ Ibid., 153.
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid., 156.
- ⁷ Ibid., 165.
- ⁸ Ibid., 167.
- ⁹ Some have called him the Church Father for the twentieth century. Cf. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction. An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2003), 111.
- ¹⁰ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans., E. C. Hoskyns, 6th ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 332-33.
- ¹¹ Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 1, part 2 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), 151.
- ¹² Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction. An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, 116.
- ¹³ Albert Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion*, trans., Walter Lowrie (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1914).
- ¹⁴ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1954). Since 1910 it has been reprinted many times.
- ¹⁵ Walter P. Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century, 1900-1950* (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999), 27.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 28.
- ¹⁷ Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion*, 63-64.
- ¹⁸ Weaver, *The Historical Jesus in the Twentieth Century, 1900-1950*, 29.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Schweitzer, *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God: The Secret of Jesus' Messiahship and Passion*, 5-6.
- ²² This approach maintains that the frameworks of the Gospel stories were created by the authors for their own specific purposes, and thus the Gospels are less helpful for historical investigation than for theological interpretation. This method seeks to classify units of scripture into literary patterns (such as love poems, parables, sayings, elegies, legends) and that attempts to trace each type to its period of oral transmission. The purpose is to determine the original form and the relationship of the life and thought of the period to the development of the literary tradition. Cf. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/213689/form-criticism> (accessed May 05, 2013). Some reference works on Form Criticism are, John H. Hayes, ed. *Old Testament Form Criticism* (San Antonio: Trinity University, 1974); Klaus Koch, *The Growth*

- of the *Biblical Tradition: The Form-Critical Method* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969); Gene M. Tucker, *Form Criticism of the Old Testament. Guides to Biblical Scholarship* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971).
- ²³ Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction. An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, 120.
- ²⁴ Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, trans., Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie Huntress Lantero (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958). This is the English translation of the 1926 book *Jesus*.
- ²⁵ William J. LaDue, *Jesus Among the Theologians: Contemporary Interpretations of Christ* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 59.
- ²⁶ Existentialism approaches the specifically human existence in terms of historicity, in terms of concepts that focus on each human as an individual who determines her/his existence through personal decisions. Cf. Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction. An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, 124.
- ²⁷ Ibid.
- ²⁸ LaDue, *Jesus Among the Theologians: Contemporary Interpretations of Christ*, 60.
- ²⁹ He asserts that the first Christians did believe him to be the Messiah, but they did not ascribe any metaphysical identity to him. It was the Greek-speaking Christians who attributed divinity to him.
- ³⁰ Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction. An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*,
- ³¹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. I (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1951), 65.
- ³² Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction. An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, 128.
- ³³ These two terms are crucial for understanding Tillich. *Essence* denotes the potential, unactualized perfection of a thing that does not exist yet. *Existence* refers to the actual being that is "fallen" from its essence, in a sense cut off from perfection. For Tillich, *existence* is always finite, fallen, limited and distorted by the condition of being cut off from its true being, its *essence*. Cf. Ibid.
- ³⁴ Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), 97.
- ³⁵ Ibid., 107.
- ³⁶ Ibid., 138.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 118-19.
- ³⁸ Ibid., 121.
- ³⁹ Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, vol. II (Chicago: University of Chicago University Press, 1963), 150.
- ⁴⁰ Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction. An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, 130.
- ⁴¹ Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 142.
- ⁴² Mathew Illathuparampil, ed. *The Contemporary Theologians: Context and Contributions* (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2006), 537.
- ⁴³ Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, 147.
- ⁴⁴ Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction. An Ecumenical, International, and Contextual Perspective*, 130.

- ⁴⁵ Christoph Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," in *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology since 1918*, ed. David F. Ford and Rachel Muers (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 139.
- ⁴⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan & Edinburgh: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company & T & T Clark Ltd., 1994), 315-439.
- ⁴⁷ Schwöbel, "Wolfhart Pannenberg," 140.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.

CHAPTER VIII

Christological Reflections from India

In the religiously plural market place Christianity too has to 'compete' with other equally living faiths. Metacosmic in character, Christianity seemed to have trouble connecting with native and cosmic religions of India. Its core teaching, particularly Christology, hindered it from harmonizing with the indigenous religions, whereas other Indian metacosmic religions were able to insert into them and create an even "higher level of intellectual sophistication."¹ A comment is in order here. It is our contention here that such a climate of 'hindrance' therefore, gave rise to Indian Christological formulations that were more metaphysical in nature.

Jesus was born in Asia. Christianity as a religion left Asia for Europe in its youth. It matured into a colonial master and ventured back to Asia after fifteen centuries as a Western religion to subjugate it. Even after centuries of mission works, the continent (of her birth) has less than four percent Christians. She failed to attract many followers. Many observe that Christianity, being the religion of the colonizers and empire builders, had a negative impact on the natives.² Pieris observes that religions that hold on to the reality of an immanent but transcendent power such as Christianity had difficulty becoming established in regions already occupied by other metacosmic religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism.³ He further observes that these metacosmic religions found cosmic indigenous religions to be natural landing pads, the "first come, first served" basis of accommodation⁴ deterred Christianity from advantageous positioning. Therefore, Pieris predicts that Asia "will remain a non-Christian continent."⁵

Christianity that came back to Asia was Western. Its Jesus was in the image of a white European male conqueror. This colonial Christ was a total stranger to Asia who despised the gods, goddesses, and spirits of Asia. The adherents of other religions have to be saved from darkness of evil. Salvation is possible for them only if they adopt Western culture

and abandon the native religious and cultural ways of life. Such a Christology found the doors of Asians closed to it. This Christ is not acceptable to them. Indian context is similar to the context of Asia. In India and elsewhere there were attempts to understand and adapt Jesus Christ both from the adherents of other religions and Christians.⁶ Among the other religions, Hindus were the first to interpret Christ in India in a comprehensive manner. *Advaita* became their central philosophical strand to interpret Jesus in the Indian context. Prominent Hindu thinkers namely: Vivekananda, Radhakrishnan interpreted Jesus as the *Yogi*, one who is in eternal union with God. He is one among the many incarnations of God. They also considered Jesus as one manifestation of the eternal principle of Vedanta. They interpreted Jesus in the light of the *Vedantic* impersonal principles, such as Christ and Buddha, and not on the basis of the historicity of a person, as in Jesus and Gautama.⁷ Radhakrishnan interpreted Jesus as the 'mystic Christ who believes in the inner light.'⁸ Gandhi the other Hindu thinker gave importance to the ethics of Christ than the person of Jesus.

Few among the pioneer Indian thinkers who made serious attempts to understand Christ studied here.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Christology

Roy (1772-1833) is hailed as the "morning star of Indian renaissance," "the prophet of Indian nationalism," "the father of modern India." Probably he is the first Indian who took seriously the Christian faith and extensively responded to it. Therefore, it will not be an exaggeration to call him the "father of Indian Christian Theology."

He was born in a Bengali Brahmin family. From childhood he pursued religiosity and in search of truth he left his home at the age of fifteen. He mastered various languages including Bengali, Sanskrit, English, Arabic and Persian. The latter particularly impressed his young mind towards the truth of monotheism as well as rejection of idolatry. He was particularly peeved by the social evils prevalent in the Indian society. He was instrumental in the abolition of the evil practice of *sati*. For this he was mainly influenced by the teachings of Jesus and Upanishads. Boyd writes, it was Christian ethics rather than Christian dogma which attracted Ram Mohan Roy, and he saw no reason why a compromise should not be possible between his own Hindu monism based on the Upanishads, and the morality of the Sermon on the Mount.⁹

He was attracted to the ethical teachings of Jesus and saw them as "a guide to peace and happiness." In 1820 he published a book called: *The Precepts of Jesus, the Guide to Peace and Happiness, Extracted*

from the Books of the New Testament, Ascribed to the Four Evangelists. This led to a fierce theological dislogue with the Germano-protestant especially with Joshua Marshman. He further published three "Apostles" counterpointing Marshman. He approached Christology from a liberal humanistic point of view. Samarth rightly points out,

Ram Mohan Roy was motivated more by the desire to build a new secular humanity in India than its relation to the established doctrines of Christianity. His task emphasis on the teaching of Jesus Christ as the guide to peace and happiness should be regarded as arising from the quest for resources to build a new humanism.¹⁰

His monistic background, his Islamic influence, and his association with Unitarians put him in league with Arians. He speaks of 'the natural interiority of the Son to the Father'.¹¹ He holds that Jesus is merely delegated with power from God, but does not possess this power intrinsically. The unity of the Father and the Son "as a supradivine concord of will and being, such existed among his Apostles, and not identity of being".¹²

He accepts the scriptural titles of Christ but in a very qualified manner. He accepts the doctrine of the Virgin Birth but makes sure that the person of Holy Spirit had no role in the same. He accepts most of the miracles of Christ, even the resurrection. However, for in India where miracles are common these are of lesser importance.

He believed Jesus to be a messenger of God, a teacher not the divine Son of God. He writes, "The epithet 'Son' found in the passage, 'Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, etc.', ought to be understood and admitted by everyone as expressing the created nature of Christ, though the most highly exalted of all creatures".¹³

He considered Jesus as a teacher par excellence. He made a deliberate effort to separate Christ (divinity) to the ecclesiastical doctrines and the teachings of Jesus. This separation, he feels was more correct and binding to the Indian mind-set.

In his effort to reform Hinduism and purge every social evil of the religion he would not wish to place Christ alongside the religious figures. He was a functional approach to the question of Christology which saw the primary task of Christology as providing a guide to peace and happiness.¹⁴ He strongly felt the Jesus was naturally inferior to the Father. Samarth writes of Roy, "Therefore, according to Ram Mohan Roy, the oneness of God and Christ is the oneness of harmony of will and purpose, not of identity in nature or being".¹⁵

The Work of Christ

Roy writes that Jesus saved/saves humanity through his teachings, his death was the supreme example of his teachings. Vicarious sacrificial death of Jesus is rejected. Salvation is accomplished not by blood of the lamb but following the precepts of Jesus: "the best and only means of obtaining the forgiveness of our sins, the favour of God, and strength to overcome our passions and to keep his commandments" (*First Appeal*, 1820, Calcutta, 10).¹⁶ Forgiveness is received through repentance not through any atoning death. Cross is the supreme example of self-devotion or sacrifice.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's Christology

Gandhi (1869-1948) was the pre-eminent political and ideological leader and also a social reformer and a prominent religious visionary of modern India. He is also called Mahatma [Great Soul an honorific given by Rabindranath Tagore] Gandhi. He is also known as *Bapu* [Father] for the masses.

After his return to India in 1915, he organised protests by peasants, farmers, and urban labourers concerning excessive land-tax and discrimination. In 1921 he became the president of Indian National Congress and led a nationwide campaign to ease poverty, expand women's rights, build religious and ethnic amity, end untouchability, and increase economic self-reliance. Above all, he aimed to achieve *Swaraj* or the independence of India from foreign domination.

He was a religious innovator who did much to encourage the growth of a reformed, liberal Hinduism in India.¹⁷ It is suggested that Hinduism should be renamed Gandhism.¹⁸

Satya (Truth), *Ahimsa* (Non-violence) and *Swadeshi* (Love of the neighbourhood) were his three major teachings. Interestingly for these teachings he found the source in the teachings of Jesus.

Gandhi knew Christianity sufficiently well. Francis argues,

He had many friends among Christians at almost every stage of his life. The most famous among these were Rev. Joseph Doke while in South Africa and C.F. Andrews besides Verrier and Miss Slade (Mira Behn) in India. He admired St. Francis of Assisi and the writing of Brother Lawrence the simple door-keeper mystic. A group of Italian nuns whom he calls 'larks of St. Francis' kept writing to him.¹⁹

Margaret Chatterjee also asserts how knowledgeable Gandhi was about Christianity:

Gandhi has commented on many of the leading events in Christ's life to a far greater extent than has any other modern Hindu. In fact he brings to the understanding of these events a Hindu insight which adds a new dimension to the interpretation of the relevant passages in the New Testament even for a Christian.²⁰

Stanley Jones says about him that, "he was a Hindu by allegiance and a Christian by affinity." "He was a Hindu who was deeply Christianized – more Christianized than most Christians."²¹ The ideas and concepts he represented seemed strangely Christian. It was not until Gandhi started studying the New Testament in his student days in London that the leaven of Christ's personality began to work within him.²² Chatterjee asks a pertinent question: "Would it be close[r] to [the] truth to say that what made an impact on Gandhi was not a package called 'Christianity' so much as the person of Christ and his teaching as seen in the gospels?"²³

It is this 'good knowledge' of Christianity which helped Gandhi to understand the basic tenets and common practices of Christians. Above all, Jesus the teacher and his ethics really attracted him. Gandhi appreciated and admired Christianity and could be said to have had a personal love for Jesus whom he claimed to follow in many ways both in the spirit of *Ahimsa* and the firmness of *Satyagraha*.²⁴

Gandhi saw Jesus from the point of view of a Hindu. He opines that "there is in Hinduism room enough for Jesus."²⁵ He considered him an Asiatic Prophet, a coloured man.²⁶ He further states that "I consider Christ as one of the great teachers of the world. Beyond that I have not gone."²⁷ He writes,

I believe that Jesus Christ was one of the greatest teachers of the world. I consider him as an Incarnation in the Hindu sense of the term. I do not believe him to be the World Saviour in the sense in which Orthodox Christianity understands the expression, but he was a saviour in the same sense as Buddha, Zoroastrian, Mohammed, and many other teachers were. In other words, I do not believe in the exclusive divinity of Jesus.²⁸

It should be noted here that over the years he realized a growing sense of the diversity and richness in the Christian tradition. He saw numerous elements and tendencies; he did not, therefore, judge Christianity on the basis of a single sect or movement.²⁹ But his first interaction with Christianity was in his childhood which he really resented. In later years he writes, "[Christian missionaries] used to stand in a corner near the High School and hold forth pouring abuse on Hindus and their gods."³⁰ Later in his life both in England and in South Africa he had some wonderful memories of Christianity which obviously influenced his

ideology to a great extent. Rao says, "There was, indeed, a time when Gandhi was wavering between Hinduism and Christianity."³¹

After his effort to be convinced by the Indian Christians to the truths of Christianity failed, he felt that for him the path of salvation lies in Hinduism; and his faith in Hinduism grew deeper. But he remained "forever indebted" to them for the religious quest that they had awakened in him.

In relating to Christianity he was convinced that an undogmatic Christianity, true to the spirit of Jesus, could yet discover and establish links with the noble characteristics in all religions.³²

He was not ready to accept Christianity as the *only* true religion and Bible was the *only* true revelation. He writes,

I could accept Jesus as a martyr, an embodiment of sacrifice and a Divine teacher and not as the most perfect man [*sic*] ever born. His death on the Cross was a great example to the world, but there was anything mysterious or miraculous virtue in it my heart could not accept. The pious lives of Christians did not give me anything that the lives of other faiths had failed to give me. I had seen in other lives just the same reformation that I had heard among Christians. Philosophically, there was nothing extraordinary in Christian principles. From the point of view of sacrifice, it seemed to me that the Hindus greatly surpassed Christians. It was impossible for me to regard Christianity as a perfect religion or the greatest of all religions.³³

'Christ the *Satyagrahi*'

It is unfortunate that Gandhi had a rather torrid relationship with Christians and Christianity. This had its influence on his understanding of Christ too. However, his reading of the New Testament, and especially that of the Sermon on the Mount, caught hold of his heart and imagination. He writes,

[T]he New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart. I compared it with the *Gita*. The verses, 'But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil: but whoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him [*sic*] the other also. And if any man [*sic*] take away the coat let him [*sic*] have the cloak too,' delighted me beyond measure and put me in mind of Shamal Bhatt's 'For a bowl of water give a goodly meal,' etc. my young mind tried to unify the teaching of the *Gita*, *The Light of Asia* and the Sermon on the Mount. That renunciation was the highest form of religion appealed to me greatly.³⁴

About the impact of Sermon on the Mount on his life Gandhi writes,

The message of Jesus as I understand it is contained in his Sermon on the Mount. The Spirit of the Sermon on the Mount competes almost on equal terms with the Bhagavad Gita for the domination of my heart. It is that Sermon which has endeared Jesus to me.³⁵

He might have rejected Christianity as an organized religion but he was really attracted to the teachings of Jesus.

Like many other Hindu thinkers, Jesus as the person failed to impress him. The historicity of the person of Jesus is not so significant to him. For him he is only an illustration of the principle of Christhood. To a query on his interpretation of the life of Christ, he said, "well, I may say that I do not accept everything in the gospels as historical truth."³⁶ He categorically maintained that,

I may say that I have never been interested in a historical Jesus. I should not care if it was proved by someone that the man called Jesus never lived, and that what was narrated in the Gospels was a figment of the writer's imagination. For the Sermon on the Mount would still be true for me.³⁷

He further reiterates,

Whilst I must not enter into it, I may suggest that God did not bear the cross only 1900 years ago, but He bears it today, and He dies and is resurrected from day to day. It would be poor comfort to the world if it had to depend upon a historical God who died 2000 years ago. Do not then preach the God of history, but show Him as He lives today through you.³⁸

Gandhi considered Christ to be a prince among *Satyagrahis*. Some of his writings make it clear to us. He writes,

Buddha fearlessly carried the war into the enemy's camp and brought down on its knees an arrogant priesthood. Christ drove out the money-changers from the temple of Jerusalem and drew down curses from Heaven upon the hypocrites and the Pharisees. Both were for intensely direct action. But even as Buddha and Christ chastised they showed unmistakable gentleness and love being every act of theirs. They would not raise a finger against their enemies, but would gladly surrender themselves rather than the truth for which they lived. ... Christ died on the Cross with a crown of thorns on his head defying the might of a whole empire. And if I raise resistance of a nonviolent character, I simply and humbly follow in the footsteps of the great teachers.³⁹

He was of the opinion that Jesus' relation with the rulers and religious authorities of his time should become a model for our living today. He says,

.... Jesus mixed with the publicans and the sinners neither as

dependent nor as a patron. He mixed with them to serve and to convert them to a life of truthfulness and purity. But he wiped the dust off his feet of those places which did not listen to his word. Would Jesus have accepted gifts from moneychangers, taken from them scholarships for his friends, and advanced loans to them to ply their nefarious traffic? Was his denunciation of hypocrites, Pharisees, and Sadducees merely in word? Or did he not actually invite the people to beware of them and shun them?⁴⁰

During his return visit from England after the round-table talk with the British Empire he had the opportunity to visit Rome. He visited Vatican and had a moving experience while gazing at the Cross of Christ. He writes,

.... And what would not I have given to be able to bow my head before the living image at the Vatican of Christ Crucified. It was not without a wrench that I could tear myself away from that scene of living tragedy. I saw there at once that nations, like individuals, could only be made through the agony of the Cross and in no other way. Joy comes not out of infliction of pain on others, but out of pain voluntarily borne by oneself.⁴¹

Gandhi argues that the virtue of mercy, nonviolence, love and truth in any human can be only tested when they are faced with a 'pressure-cooker' situation. This is the real test of *Ahimsa*. One who gets oneself killed out of sheer helplessness, however, can in nowise to be said to have passed the test. He says,

He who when being kicked bears no anger against his murderer and even asks God to forgive him [*sic*] is truly nonviolent. History relates this to Jesus Christ.

With His dying breath on His Cross He is reported to have said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."⁴²

A *satyagrahi* for Gandhi would stay the course in the midst of every eventuality. He says,

The theory is that an adequate appeal to the heart never fails. Seeming failure is not the law of *Satyagraha* but of incompetence of the *satyagrahi* by whatever cause induced. It may not be possible to give a complete historical instance. The name of Jesus at once comes to the lips. *It is an instance of brilliant failure*. And he has been acclaimed in the West as the prince of passive resisters. I showed years ago in South Africa that the adjective "passive" was a misnomer, at least as applied to Jesus. He was the most active resister known perhaps to history. His was nonviolence *par excellence*.⁴³

Reproving the Western civilization he says that it has misunderstood the resistance Jesus offered against the empire of his time – the Romans.

Jesus' resistance was nonviolent but transformative. He writes,

Europe mistook the bold and brave resistance, full of wisdom, by Jesus of Nazareth for passive resistance, as if it was of the weak. As I read the New Testament for the first time, I detected no passivity, no weakness about Jesus as depicted in the four Gospels, and the meaning became clearer to me when I read Tolstoy's *Harmony of the Gospels* and his other kindred writings. Has not the West paid heavily in regarding Jesus as a passive resister? Christendom has been responsible for the wars which put to shame even those described in the Old Testament and other records, historical or semi-historical.⁴⁴

He considered Western Christianity as an extension of Western imperialism, *himsa* and materialism. Unless Christianity in India disassociates itself from this umbilical cord, it would not be able to make much of an impact in India.

Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya's Christology

Upadhyaya was born Bhawani Charan Banerjee (1861-1907). It is through his uncle Kalicharan Banerjee that he was introduced to the tenets of Christianity. Early in his life he was attracted to Brahmo Samaj and became a missionary of the Samaj in Sind where he came into contact with Christian missionaries and became one in 1891 when he took baptism. He joined the Roman Catholic faith and remained a true believer. Later in life he became a Christian monk. Later in his life, he maintained that he was fully a Hindu and at the same time a fully Christian. Many of his writings are found in two magazines that he started: *Sandhya* and *Sophia*.

His Christology has to be gleaned from his writings scattered in many sources. One of his famous Christological hymns is:

Hymn of the Incarnation

The transcendent Image of Brahman,
Blossomed and mirrored in the full-to-overflowing
Eternal Intelligence –
Victory to God, the God-Man.

Child of the pure Virgin,
Guide of the Universe, infinite in Being
Yet Beauteous with relations,
Victory to God, the God-Man.

Ornament of the Assembly

Of saints and sages, Destroyer of fear, Chastiser
Of the Spirit of Evil, –
Victory to God, the God-Man.

Dispeller of weakness
Of soul and body, pouring out life for others,
Whose deeds are holy,
Victory to God, the God-Man.

Priest and Offerer
Of his own soul in agony, whose Life is Sacrifice,
Destroyer of sin's poison, –
Victory to God, the God-Man.

Tender, beloved,
Soothe of the human heart, Ointment of the eyes,
Vanquisher of fierce death, –
Victory to God, the God-Man.

His Christology is very orthodox and he uses Hindu terminologies to explain the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Person of Jesus Christ

Christ is the Image of God (*Brahman*) and in him the eternal Word (*Cit* – intelligence), the fullness of the Godhead, who is the true *Nara-Hari*⁴⁵ (Man-God). He is the infinite, the upholder of the universe, and yet is born of a Virgin; though he is 'infinite in being' (*nirguna*), yet he is also 'with relations' (*saguna*) and so personal and knowable.⁴⁶ Following Keshab Chander Sen, he regards Christ as the divine Wisdom, the *Cit* of *Saccidânanda*.

Work of Christ

His language is very poetic and imagery oriented, rich with biblical and Indian concepts. He writes: Jesus' deeds are holy, showing the essential connection between God and morality. He pours out his life for others, in agony of soul, giving himself as sacrifice, he who is both priest and victim. Christ destroys the poison of sin by drinking the cup himself.

In no uncertain terms he affirms that Jesus Christ is fully God and fully human, 'the transcendent image of *Brahman*' but also 'Child of the pure Virgin,' and to express this fact of the two natures united in one Christ he often uses for Jesus the name *Nara-Hari* (Man-God). His uniqueness lies in the fact that he has given a clear description of the

interrelation of the divine and human Christ without using western terms, either ancient or modern according to Boyd.⁴⁷

Incarnation or *Avatâra*?

According to the *Vaisnava* tradition of Hinduism God, *Isvara*, from time to time comes down to earth as an *avatâra*, in order to save humanity and destroy the evil. *Bhagavadgita* portrays the best picture of this doctrine in its classical sense where Krishna says to Arjuna:

Whenever there is a decline of law, O Arjuna, and an outbreak of lawlessness, I incarnate myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked and the establishment of the law I am born from age to age.⁴⁸

Upadhyay's major contribution to Indian Christian theology was his reasoning that Jesus as not an *Avatâra* within the Hindu pantheon. M. M. Thomas denies Upadhyay ever used the word *Avatâra* to describe Christ's incarnation, "because *Avatâra* were a lower order of divinity than *Sat* and because there were many *Avatâra* who descended to the world to destroy wickedness and restore the established moral order."⁴⁹ He rejected such a description of Jesus primarily because he considered Jesus unique – the *Parabrahman*, God incarnate of whom there can be no none higher. Upadhyaya writes,

The doctrine of the Christian incarnation is altogether different and is wholly a matter of faith. The theory that an incarnate saviour, understood in the Christian sense, is as necessary as the sunlight is to the eye, is erroneous. All Christian theologians hold that human nature cries for redemption but cannot instinctively conceive of the scheme of redemption . . . [This redemption] is a pure condescension, and is not a necessity of nature, though nature too is of God. [So there is] the sectarian missionary device to oust Krishna from the Gita and bring in Christ instead, is an historical error, and also a theological blunder whether considered from the Hindu or Christian point of view.⁵⁰

Upadhyaya maintained that Hindu *Satchitananda* (Brahman) corresponds to Christian Trinity. Using *advaita Vedanta* as the tool to interpret Trinity he proposed God the Father as *Sat* (Truth); the Son, the Logos, the second Person of Trinity as *Chit* (Intelligence); and the third Person, the Holy Spirit as *Ananda* (Bliss). He observes that *advaita Vedanta* is a conducive philosophy for Indian theology because it maintains that among everything that exists, God's existence is the only essential; all the rest have conditional existence.⁵¹ This has problem for an Indian Christology that takes seriously the realities of the world. It is observed that he did not explore the liberating dimensions of the Hindu culture in relation to the realities of Indian life. For him, revelation is

beyond the natural. Therefore, salvation and revelation remain, for him, at the metaphysical level. He failed to see revelation as the encounter of Christ with the totality of human life.⁵² His argument for a metaphysical Christ made him unable to see the evils of the caste system.⁵³ His rejection of the historical Jesus, of Jesus the *Avatâra* and his upper-caste Brahmin background cause his failure to address the social realities of India.⁵⁴ Such a one-sided Christology fails to make Jesus real to the Indian context.

Vengal Chakkarai's Christology

Another prominent figure in Indian Christian Theology was **Vengal Chakkarai** (1880-1958).⁵⁵ He was from a very wealthy Hindu family and was a lawyer by profession. He was a lay theologian but he exerted a great influence on the Indian Christian thinking. He was a prominent member of what became known as the 'Rethinking Christianity' movement. This group was concerned with redefining the Christian faith in Indian terms and relating it to the cultural heritage of the country. His theology was closer to Keshub Chandra Sen's interpretation of *Satchitananda* (as being/truth; awareness & intelligence; and bliss/joy). However, he reinterpreted *Satchitananda* as: *sat* – the unity of the universal spirit of beauty; *cit* – love; *ananda* – truth. He maintained that Jesus is the *Avatâra* of God. His Christology is called a 'Christology of the Spirit.' He writes, "Jesus was the most egoless person known in history, therefore the most universal of all."⁵⁶ It is said that he inherited this thought from Sen. He connects Christology with the ethical demands of Jesus. Union with Christ is to choose the path of egoless Christianity. He laments that modern theology has over emphasized on reason and has reduced the historical Jesus to a "mere dialectician, a reformer, and an asserter of messianic claims."⁵⁷ Instead he calls us to receive "the immortal Christ as the Universal Spirit of beauty, love and truth (*sat*, *chit*, and *anandam*) and not as a separate individual spirit."⁵⁸

Orevillo-Montenegro rightly points out the problem with Chakkarai's Christology. She writes,

Chakkarai's 'ego-less Jesus' may pose some danger to women. It could be used to reinforce the passivity and subservience that patriarchy has already instilled in women. It may promote internalization of oppression that makes women lose their sense of self-worth and personhood. The concept of an 'ego-less Jesus' glosses over the suffering of women, children, and the vulnerable and may encourage them to sacrifice their bodies at the altar of male-constructed structures in the name of Christ. It may trap people in the abyss of resignation and fear.⁵⁹

This is the danger of glossing over the historical particularity of Jesus in christologizing in the Indian context. Chakkarai's Christology was not able to connect the universal spirit of *Satchitananda* with the ugly social realities of India namely: caste system, class, gender inequality, ecological crisis etc.

Aiyarudai Jesudasan Appasamy's Christology

Appasamy (1891-1975) was a former bishop of the Church of South India (CSI, 1950-59) and a leading Tamil Christian theologian of the last century. He wrote his doctoral thesis on: "The Mysticism of the Fourth Gospel in its Relation to the Hindu *Bhakti* Literature." He was particularly influenced by his deep friendship with Sadhu Sundar Singh. He argued for an indigenous Christianity. As a philosophical school he made use of *visisthadvaita*, the devotional tradition in Hinduism to understand Christ.⁶⁰ He challenged the traditional Chalcedonian tendency and the Hindu monistic (*advaitic*) tendency which view the union between the Father and the Son as a metaphysical one. He sees the union as one that is moral and functional. Through *bhakti* (devotion) to Jesus one can experience the union with God.

He did not accept the concept of *Avatâra* for Christ. He makes several distinction between *Avatâra* and incarnation of Christ:

1. In Hinduism *Avatâra* is repeated whereas the incarnation of Christ is once for all.
2. In Hinduism *Avatâra* is either partial or incomplete. Such a view is incompatible with the Christian view of the incarnate Christ who is the incarnation of the whole being of God, and in whom the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily.
3. In Hinduism *Avatâra* returns back to its original state after its purpose is over, whereas the incarnation of Christ is permanent.
4. In Hinduism *Avatâra* arises to destroy the wicked, whereas the incarnation of Christ is to seek and to save the lost.
5. In Hinduism *Avatâra* is mere theophany, whereas the incarnation of Christ is real and historical.
6. In Hinduism *Avatâra* can be apparent, whereas the incarnation of Christ historically grounded.

Appasamy argues that Christian incarnation of Christ is once for all and unique. He writes,

We believe that Jesus was the *Avatâra*. God lived on the earth as a man [*sic*] only once and that was as Jesus It is our firm Christian belief that among all the great religious figures in the world there is no one except Jesus who could be regarded as an Incarnation of God.⁶¹

Unlike Upadhyaya's Christology Appasamy did not gloss over the evils of the societies. However, we feel that *bhakti* to Jesus alone will end up in spiritualizing the realities of the world. The danger of hushing up the historical realities will be very high.

Pandipeddi Chenchiah's Christology

Another important figure in Indian Christian Theology is the lay theologian, **Pandipeddi Chenchiah** (1886-1959) who along with Chakkarai and others were leading members of 'Rethinking Christianity' movement. He was the Chief Justice of Pudukkottai State in the erstwhile British India. He observed that Indian theology not simply as having the limited function of translating the core of faith in Indian terms, but as having the function of actually reassessing those early formulations on which the Christian faith is based. For him the raw fact of Christ was the only unalterable core of Christianity.⁶²

His theology is described as the theology of the New Creation. He remarked, "We need to shift Christianity in India from creed to conduct, from conduct to new life."⁶³ He emphasized on Christ as the 'New Man,' on the Resurrection and Pentecost. He saw Christ as the one totally new factor that emerged in cosmic history and as the key to the transformation of humanity and the world. Christ is the 'central point of all religions' in the sense that Jesus the Christ, the reality of the new being and giver of creative energy, is the key to the transformation of humanity, nature, and the whole universe.⁶⁴ It is in this the universality of Jesus is understood. There is a similarity with Chakkarai's understanding of Jesus' humanity. Nevertheless, Chakkarai's Jesus is the *Avatâra*, the human manifestation of God, while Chenchiah's Jesus is the historic figure, the raw 'cosmic fact' that reveals the full meaning in a cosmic context.⁶⁵

Chenchiah's Christology is an inclusive Christology.⁶⁶ He considered Hinduism as his 'spiritual mother.' Hinduism had nurtured him to discern spiritual greatness and had led him to grasp the meaning of Christ.

He considered Christ as a 'creative energy.' Orevillo-Montenegro writes that this concept is an useful tool in relating Christ to the various religious faiths of Asia. However, she also feels that this view could also lead to anthropocentrism.⁶⁷ For Chenchiah, "in man [*sic*], as in Jesus, a new creative factor has entered creation. Man [*sic*] has been the centre and the creator of a new order by virtue of the new life which is his."⁶⁸ Orevillo-Montenegro has rightly pointed out a weakness of Chenchiah's Christology. An anthropocentric centred Christology has done much violence to women and the earth.⁶⁹ It has provided the theological basis

for male domination over women and the earth and its living beings. His Christology has been silent to the historical and social realities of India including the curse of caste system.

Paul David Devanandan's Christology

Devanandan⁷⁰ (1901-62) was an ordained presbyter of the Church of South India (CSI). He was the first director of Christian Institute for the Study Religion and Society (CISRS) in Bangalore. Because of the influence of the prominent Christian nationalist K. T. Paul on Devanandan he was determined to take full part, as a Christian, in nation-building activities.⁷¹

After his studies at Yale, he returned back to India to teach philosophy and the history of religions at United Theological College (UTC), Bangalore. As a young theologian he was influenced by both Barth and Kraemer, though later he objected to many of their view points. His theology was not as radical or new as that of Upadhyaya. "On the contrary, his attitude to the basic affirmations of the Creed is impeccably orthodox, and we find little that is especially 'Indian' in what he says about Scripture, the atonement or the church" writes Boyd.⁷² He further writes, "he is not seeking to 'adapt' the Christian message to Hinduism but rather so to understand the inner working of Hinduism that the may be able to show his Hindu friends the points at which their beliefs can find true meaning only in Christ."⁷³ His adoption of Hindu philosophical and religious discourse of the non-Christian faith was functional. These were mere instruments through which gospel could be translated and interpreted to the Indian populace.

His Christology is an orthodox Christology which is to be translated into the Indian context. He placed more emphasis on the metaphysical notion of the Christ than stressing on the Jesus of Nazareth. He differed with Chakkarai's view about people becoming 'Christ-like.' For him 'perfect manhood' of Jesus was a 'minor incident in the eternal fact of Christ.'⁷⁴ The ethics of Jesus were ideal, not practical. And the historical facts of Christ must be substantiated by the eternal fact.⁷⁵ Even though he spoke of Christ as *Shakti*, the bottom line for Devanandan was that in Jesus of Nazareth, the Word of God has been manifest unequivocally and finally. For him the finality of Christ has been decided 'once and for all.'

Devanandan's idea of God as personal has implication for Christological formulations in India. He argues that God is Ultimate Truth, but maintains that he is also fully personal (unlike the *Vedāntic* teaching that *Brahman* is ultimately *nirguna*), and points out that the biblical

phrase, 'The Lord thy God,' in effect equates *Isvara* with *Brahman*.⁷⁶ However, he maintains that God is not personal in a human sense. He views God's personality as incomprehensible and surpasses all our views of personality.⁷⁷ Now the question arises, how can God who seems to be personal understand the realities of the world? God in Jesus has encountered the realities of the world. Such a Christological affirmation makes sense to the people of India.

M. M. Thomas' Christology

Christologizing process in India took a sharp turn from 1960s onwards. A prominent Indian thinker of this period was **M. M. Thomas** (1916-96).⁷⁸ He found it important to reflect on the significance of Jesus the Christ not only in the realm of religions but also in the secular, political world.⁷⁹ The realities of modern India made a deep impact on Thomas. He valued the enlightenment inspired secularization of nature. However, he also saw the negative side of it when human beings divinized science and technology and thus became slaves of their own tools. He feels that Christ must liberate human beings from this modern slavery too. For him, the metaphysical Christ of the traditional theologies – Indian and Western alike – is powerful in the face of this condition.⁸⁰

This was the period in India and elsewhere when major efforts were put in to understand Christ from a pluralistic perspective and his message's universality was studied. The notions of 'Unknown Christ',⁸¹ 'Unbound Christ',⁸² 'Anonymous Christ',⁸³ and 'Acknowledged Christ'⁸⁴ were put forth to validate the universal Christ. But for Thomas, the historical cross of Jesus is still the decisive criterion for discerning the stirrings of positive responses of faiths to the universal cross, upon which hangs the world's suffering.⁸⁵ Jesus on the Cross exposed the adversaries of God and the misdirection of humanity. Christ crucified is the 'prototype of true humanhood' in the historical realm and becomes a source of humanization for *homo sapiens*.⁸⁶ He said that in Jesus, God meets humanity because Christ is at work even in secular and non-Christian movements, in their creative struggle for freedom and for an independent home for the Asian spirit. For him the revolution in the world history especially in Asia have within them "the promise of Christ for a fuller and richer life for man [*sic*] and society."⁸⁷ Thomas remained convinced of the finality of the crucified Messiah even though he validity of other secular messiahs. The gospel is about what God has done in the incarnation, life and death of Jesus of Nazareth in one particular historical moment. This event gives all history a spiritual relevance and affirms God's act "through, in, and for Jesus Christ."⁸⁸

The Christological contribution of M. M. Thomas is that his theological anthropology laid the foundation for a more active theological engagement in India.⁸⁹ Bird would argue that Thomas became the theological signpost for emergence of Dalit theology in India.⁹⁰

Sebastian Kappen's Christology

Taking cues from Thomas, Indian Jesuit priest **Sebastian Kappen** (1924-1993)⁹¹ proposed a Christology using the revolutionary message of Jesus in the face of the social realities and human life in Asia.⁹² As his methodological position, he focused more on the historical, secular Jesus who addresses the social problems of Indian society than on traditional speculative (both Indian and Western) Christologies. Jesus for him is the "unique, intense, unparalleled manifestation of the transcendent in the flow of history."⁹³

For Kappen, Jesus is the counter-culture prophet, one who creates a liberating culture and whose allies are the social and political forces that fight the oppressive castes and capitalism.⁹⁴ His proposal is for a secular Jesus who has impact beyond the boundaries of Christianity because he lived what he taught, made history with God the centre of his life, and met God in the heart of the world. His death is a consequence of his work for existential liberation.⁹⁵

One notes in his christologizing that he addressed the issues of class, race, caste, gender, ecology and other social realities. For him, the Jesus of history, unlike the dogmatic Christ, initiated a humanizing praxis and proclaimed equality of all humanity. Jesus' teachings resonate with Asian sensibilities, that God reveals "himself not only in, but also as nature and history," and even beyond it.⁹⁶

Kalagara Subba Rao's Christology

Rao (1922-1981) was the leader of a Hindu-Christian Movement from Andhra Pradesh. He was known for his devotional songs and critique of institutional church. According to him, in 1942 he had a vision of Christ when he was an atheist which turned his whole course of life. Along with the vision he received the gift of healing. He is particularly well-known for his devotional Telugu songs which he sung with his *tambura* (a long-necked stringed instrument) at various devotional meetings. His theology is mostly found in these devotional renderings.⁹⁷

Boyd calls the religion of Subba Rao as Christo-centric mysticism.⁹⁸ His dedication to Christ was complete and central. In his name alone he performed the healing miracles. He writes,

The very name of JESUS inspires me. The moment I hear that

Name, the moment I see Jesus on the Cross, I am overwhelmed with something I can't describe.... For him I live, and for him I die. That is my religion. That is my baptism – that is my philosophy – that is my heaven – that is my everything. I need nothing more.⁹⁹

Boyd writes, "for him, the meaning of faith is to become one with Jesus, and therefore to follow his example in everything, especially in loving service, including the ministry of healing."¹⁰⁰

Christification is the goal of Christianity. Becoming Christ should be the aim of Christians. He writes, "By religion and baptism you became a Christian. Don't you know that you too must become Christ by living like Jesus?"¹⁰¹

Baago opines that even though Subba Rao is Christo-centric in his approach he would not consider him God but a gurudev or a sadguru who brings salvation.¹⁰² However, his own writings portrays a different picture. He had a genuine experience of the Christ event. His approach perhaps presents a genuine Indian, or rather Hindu, approach to a genuine encounter with Jesus, according to Boyd.¹⁰³ According to M. M. Thomas, in him we find, "a Christ-centred Hindu church of Christ which transforms Hindu thought and life from within."¹⁰⁴

Rao accepts the Vedantic idea of unreal world and its subjugation to *mâyâ*. Salvation or *mukti* therefore, is from the realization of oneness with the Real that is Christ where the distinction of "I" and "thou" are removed. This Christian Vedanta is balanced by a whole hearted commitment to unselfish service of others. Unity with Christ, the Truth, is to be found by overcoming the selfishness of the body, and in this way we receive 'release' – a release that sends us to the world for service of others.¹⁰⁵ For Rao this service of humanity is through spiritual healing in the name of Jesus.

Christological formulations saw a paradigm shift with the advent of Liberation theologies of Latin America. Return to Historical Jesus, Priority of Praxis over theology, and God in Christ's preferential option for the poor became the foremost Christological focal points. In India too these became the methodological starting point of christologizing. Our next section deals with some of these liberative Christologies.

Christology from a Dalit Perspective

Dalit Theology

Dalit theology is an Indian contextual theology. It is an experiential theology. It incorporates Dalit story and Dalit struggles as important theological categories. The aim of Dalit theology is the realization of Dalit liberation from all dehumanizing oppressive structures.

Dalit Christology ideates the liberating experience through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The term Dalit has its root in three oldest languages of the world, namely Hebrew, Sanskrit and Akkadian.¹⁰⁶ The word 'Dalit' is derived from the Sanskrit word *dal*, means 'broken' and 'down-trodden'. A. P. Nirmal, can be considered as the "father of Dalit theology." He explains, the Dalits are 1) the broken, the torn, the rent, the burst, the split; 2) the opened, the expanded; 3) the bisected; 4) the driven asunder, the dispelled, the scattered; 5) the downtrodden, the crushed, the destroyed; and 6) the manifested, the displayed.¹⁰⁷

The sociological structuring of the Hindu India was based on caste. The society was divided into four categories: Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (traders), and Shudras (workers). But there were millions who were outside these categories – the 'Dalits.' 'Dalits' were branded as *avarnas*, *Panchamas* (fifth caste), *chandlas* (doomed people), Untouchables, Depressed class and so on by *varnashrama* dharma (the four fold caste division), high caste Hindus and the British Government respectively.

'Dalit' theology emerged as a theological proposition in the early 1980s. It was Arvind P. Nirmal's (faculty at UTC, Bangalore) lecture entitled 'Towards a Shudra Theology' to the Carey Society of the United Theological College, Bangalore, in April 1981¹⁰⁸ that paved the way for 'Dalit' theologizing in Indian context. Nirmal did not use the word 'Dalit' in his presentation, this paper provided a strong foundation for the Dalit theology which emerged subsequently. Wilson, marked a clear shift in the direction of Indian Christian Theology from a Dalit perspective. He was the first one to use 'Dalit' as a category to do theology.¹⁰⁹ Some of the pioneers of Dalit theology are A. P. Nirmal, M. E. Prabhakar, James Massey, K. Wilson, M. Azariah, Abraham Ayrookuzhiyil, V. Devasahayam, F. J. Balasundaram, and J. C. Webster.

Dalit theology is both an 'identity theology' and 'counter theology'. As an identity theology, it highlights the distinctive identity of Dalit people.¹¹⁰ Prabhakar writes, "Dalit theology is a particular people's theology i.e., that of the Dalits, therefore a theology *of* the Dalits, *by* the Dalits and *for* the Dalits."¹¹¹ As an identity theology, Dalit theology is the theological reflection on Dalit experiences, Dalit sufferings, Dalit history, Dalit Culture and Dalit emancipation exclusively by Dalits. There is a methodological exclusivism proposed in doing Dalit theology.¹¹² As a 'counter theology' Dalit theology challenges traditional Indian Christian theology and marks a radical paradigm shift by rejecting any inclination towards Brahmanic traditions¹¹³ which resulted in maintaining the status

quo of caste system in the Indian society. It also challenges the dominant nature of traditional Indian Christian theology and thereby discarding the oppressive elements of Hindu religion which had historically denied Dalit humanity. Prabhakar writes,

[I]t [Dalit theology] is a new theology because it is from below and uses Dalit peoples languages and expressions, their stories and songs of sufferings and triumphs, popular wisdom including their values, proverbs, folk lore and myths and so on to interpret their history and culture and to articulate a faith to live by and to act on.¹¹⁴

Dalit Christology

Dalit theology today is identified as a major contextual theology in India. However, not much is written on Dalit Christology. Here we mention few Christological comments of the leading Dalit proponents.

Christology from the Dalit perspective expresses the Dalit realities through the paradigm of the life of Jesus Christ. It interprets the relevance of the person and work of Jesus Christ to a marginalized, oppressed and de-humanized people; the Dalits. It is a re- interpretation of Christology in Dalit categories. "The articulation of Dalit Christology is inextricably is interlinked with the issue of Dalitness" writes Rajkumar.¹¹⁵ Prabhakar writes, "What the Dalits think of Jesus Christ and God's saving act in and through him is integrally linked with their dehumanised social existence and their hope for a future in Christ, freed from all inhumanity and injustice."¹¹⁶ Dalit Christology is what create within the Dalits a realization, a 'consciousness' of their own intrinsic worth, 'their full humanness' through Christ. What is implicit in Dalit Christology is the attempt to make the Dalits realize their humanness and dignity through the Dalitness of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁷ Nirmal states, "Jesus of India is in the midst of the liberation struggle of the Dalits of India."¹¹⁸ Jesus Christ himself was a Dalit.¹¹⁹ It is his Dalitness that helps in understanding the mystery of his divine-human unity.¹²⁰ Jesus' socio-cultural and economic situation, his 'dubious' ancestry portrays his Dalit condition. He was called as a carpenter's son. He was mocked, jeered, and crucified (cursed death). His cross and resurrection become symbols for victory for Jesus over the dehumanizing structures. Jesus openly identified with the poor, wretched and the outcast(e) of the society. Nazareth manifesto (Luke 4:18-19) is used to point out that "the gospel Jesus brought was the gospel for Dalits and not for non-Dalits."¹²¹ Nirmal remarks that in our exodus to Jesus Christ, we have had a liberating experience.¹²²

As noted earlier, Dalit theologians have not systematized a major

Dalit Christology. Rajkumar rightly points out, “Dalit theology doesn’t offer the necessary Christic impetus which will make involvement in transformation a pragmatic possibility.”¹²³ Dalit Christology has to pave the way for Indian Christologies to identify and to expose the evils structures of servitude in Indian society. “... Dalit Christology had the potential to operate as a palliative inuring the Dalits to their existing suffering through marginalization and make the Dalits masochistic in their attitude towards suffering.”¹²⁴ He proposes the paradigm of Jesus, the healer in the midst of social segregation on the basis of notions of pure and impure in the Indian context.¹²⁵

Christology from Tribal (North-East India) Perspective

Tribal Theology

Broadly speaking there are two different kinds of tribals in India: *Adivasis* (the tribals from the plains) and tribals from north-east India hills. *Adivasis* had some kind of contact with the prevalent religion – Hinduism, however there was very little contact between tribals from north-east India. The north-east India hill tribes with the exception of a few are all Christian converts. Christianity provided them with access to education and modernization.

United Nation Sub-commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities puts forth a working definition of indigenous/tribal people:

Indigenous communities, people and nations, are those which having an historical continuity with pre-invasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generation their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institution and legal system.¹²⁶

The tribal communities in north-east India are represented by three major racial groups: (i) the Sino-Tibetan communities who began to move into the region as early as the third millennium BC; the Boro-Bodo tribes in the Brahmaputra Valley and other tribal groups in Arunachal Pradesh trace back their origin to that early migration; (ii) the Siamese section of the Mongoloids migrated around eighth century BC, and later the Thai tribes entered the region, established the Ahom kingdom, and ruled over Assam; the Kuki-Chin tribes also came and settled in the southern region; (iii) a large number of northern tribals – the Mundaris,

Hos, Santalis, Oraons, Gonds, and others were brought to Assam by the Britishers to work in tea estates. Major tribes in north-east India are: Austro-Asiatic (Khasis, Jaintias); Bodo (Dimasa, Boro, Kachari, Rabha, Garo, Ghutia, and Tripuri); Dravidian (Dom and Kivartas); Indo-Burmese (Nagas); Indo-Tibetan (Miri, Mishmi, Nishi, Akhas, Apatani, Adi, Monpa, Nocte, Wancho, Tangsa); Kuki-Lushai (Mizo, Hmar, Halam, Thadou, Ralte, Paiti, Pawi, Lakher, Riang); Chin-Kuki (Moriang, Phadang, Mikirs, Amri); and Indo-Aryan and Shan-Tai (Assamese, Ahom, Khamti, Phakial, Aitonias).¹²⁷

Indigenous/Tribal theology is a newcomer and this emerging theology among the alienated and marginalized minorities may be called ‘Indigenous peoples or tribal theology.’ It is a people’s theology born out of the experiences of injustice and exploitation in the context of their assertion for right and identity. It is also a liberation and resistance theology.¹²⁸ It attempts to express Christian faith in the context of the socio-cultural, religious, traditional, and liturgical through pattern of the indigenous people. It uses the experiences of oppressions, and hardships; traditional stories, myths, symbols, dances, songs, and their connectedness to land and environment as sources of doing theology.

Minz and Longchar explains tribal theology in the following words:

In terms of doing theology, the point of departure of the tribal theology from other contextual theologies is that the tribal theology seeks liberation from the perspective of ‘space.’ In their search for liberation, the issue of space is central and crucial in doing theology. A peculiar character of tribal world view is that the tribal people’s culture, religion, spirituality, and even the Supreme Being cannot be conceived without ‘creation/land’ or ‘space.’ Humans always understand themselves as ‘an integral part of creation/land and not apart from it.’¹²⁹

Tribal theologizing, therefore, has to interact with these if it has to become relevant contextual theology. The question of justice, identity, and human dignity therefore is crucial for tribal theology.

Tribal Christology

For reasons unknown there is so little written on Christology from the north-east Indian tribal perspective. Shohe opines that the strand of Christianity that was preached to the tribals in north-east India too has its influence on its Christological formulations. These were more from pietistic influence.¹³⁰ Probably that explains the dearth of Christological formulations from the north-east India tribal context.¹³¹ Here we present some of the available Christological formulations from a Naga

perspective.¹³²

Vashum¹³³ argues that vision of tribal/indigenous theology is to become a self-theologizing community. Such an effort needs moving beyond the existing norms of Christian theologizing. He uses local/indigenous cultural categories to construct a Christology of culture and liberation. He proposes Jesus as the Rooster.

Every society identifies a special or sacred animal/bird that symbolizes their identity. For the Naga's, Rooster is a sacred animal/bird. As a community Nagas have had various observances and ceremonies. Animals/birds were often used as sacrificial offerings. Of all these, the rooster was by far the most valued sacrificial object. It was regarded as something that possessed the right qualities for being a sacrifice: purity, aesthetic beauty, and physical charm. "A rooster is decorated with beautiful ornaments from head to toe. He not only looks gorgeous, he also appears very gracious at the same time." It is also considered one of the most alert, intelligent and humble creature. Humility was an important trait, a blameless rooster was often chosen for sacrifice.¹³⁴

Rooster Sacrifice for Human Protection

Rooster sacrifice was conducted for restoring wellness and harmony among individuals or community. When an individual was sick, the family members of the sick would invite the *khanong* (Tangkul Naga) – the medical practitioner to conduct a sacrificial ceremony (*Tanula* – soul-calling ceremony among the Ao Nagas). A blameless rooster is taken to the outskirts of the village, it is then tossed up into the air and released into the jungle by the medical practitioner while reciting these words: "Take this rooster instead of [the suffering individual] and release the soul immediately." It is expected that the rooster would not return back to the village, which was considered a good omen. The sick would then recover. But if it returns back then it is understood that the sick would never recover from the illness.¹³⁵

For the purification of the whole community too rooster was used as a sacrificial object. *Genna*, is the purification ceremony practiced by the Nagas. The medical practitioner along with the members of the village would move to the outskirts of the village and toss up the rooster into the air and release the same to the jungle while asking the Sacred Being's blessings upon the community. The "releasing" of the rooster meant its imminent death.¹³⁶ The whole purpose of the ceremony was the purification of the village from all kinds of evil and protection from future epidemics and calamities.

Rooster was also a mythic figure that was responsible for persuading the Sacred Being to provide sunlight to the world thereby maintaining the duration of day and night.¹³⁷

Jesus and the Rooster

Vashum uses rooster as a representative of Jesus and begins with rooster and looks unto Jesus' sacrifice as a relational aspect from the scripture. He says,

In the sacrifice of the rooster and the death of Jesus Christ, the underlying significance is that both the rooster and Jesus died so that the people might live. There are, of course, limitations in the use of the rooster as the representative of Jesus Christ. While, the rooster sacrifice is temporary and significance is limited to the particular community on whose behalf the sacrifice is made, the death of Jesus Christ is permanent and has universal appeal. However, notwithstanding the limitations, there is a great deal of significance attached to the vicarious suffering of the rooster and Jesus on whose behalf they both sacrificed their lives.¹³⁸

Jesus, the Elder Brother

Vashum, offers another metaphor – the Elder Brother to explain the significance of Jesus. He says, "...the Gospel writers describe the status of Jesus as being the 'firstborn son' (cf. Lk. 2:7; Mt. 1:25). As firstborn son, 'he constituted not only the continuation of the family but also the continuity and permanence of Israel's covenant relationship with God.'¹³⁹ He further says: "Jesus Christ is truly an 'elder brother' whose life demonstrated the qualities that were expected of an elder brother. Jesus is the elder brother par excellence, for in him the desires and expectations of an elder brother came into its fulfilment."¹⁴⁰

Jesus, the Ancestor

Vashum offers yet another metaphor in speaking of Christ – the Ancestor. He writes,

The ancestor and the elder brother exercised a critical role of being mediators. The elder brother being the eldest son in the family was charged with religious duties including offering sacrifices to the Supreme Being on behalf of the family. On the death of the father the eldest was expected to carry out all family ceremonies and sacrifices. On the other hand, the ancestor played a mediating role between the spiritual world and the living.¹⁴¹

He further writes,

In the worldview of the tribals, the notion of the community

encompassed not only the living but also the dead and the spiritual beings; the ancestors were an integral part of the community. Additionally, as a life giving source in the sense that through the ancestors generations of human societies have come to exist, the ancestors were closer to the Source.¹⁴²

He also writes, "In adapting the role of Jesus to the tribal cultural context, one can substitute Jesus as the Ancestor who represents the mystery of the invisible God."¹⁴³

Christology from *Adivasi* Perspective

In generic sense, the term '*Adivasi*' in Hindi, means 'tribal.' In Sanskrit *adi* means original and *vasi* means inhabitant – meaning the original inhabitants. They are also known as indigenous peoples, *moolvasis*, aboriginals, hill tribes, ethnic minorities and nationalities. However in course of time the term '*Adivasi*' has gained specific popular connotation – signifying such tribes as Kharias, Mundas, Oraons, Santals and a few other tribes of North India, particularly centering on the Chotanagpur plateau, the original habitat of the *Adivasis*. Hence, they are also called Chotanagpuri *Adivasis* to distinguish them from other tribals in India.

The *adivasis* live on the fringes of Indian society in areas that were generally not integrated into the states of historic India, often dwelling in forests, jungles, and hills. *Adivasi* languages and cultures differ from those of the dominant Indian communities, and there is tremendous diversity among the *adivasis* across India. They were not part of the traditional caste system and have no internal caste distinctions in their heritage, but they frequently suffer discrimination from being excluded from Indian society. There were repeated protests and rebellions against outside forces throughout the period of British and independent rule; at the centre of the disputes were land, forest, and water, together with cultural and social domination by outside forces, whether British or Indian elites.¹⁴⁴ Kujur explains that Christians played a positive role in their overall upliftment:

Contact with friendly European missionaries and Christians injected new courage into the *adivasis* who had so far been dejected and felt helpless. They were no longer submissive to their lot but stood up against the oppression of the landlords and asserted their rights.¹⁴⁵

The *adivasis*' traditional religious practices are not those of Brahmin Hinduism. Some Hindus may contest the claim that tribals are not Hindus. There has been many mass-conversions among the *adivasis*. Over the years this has become a major contention between Christians and Hindu right-wingers.

Adivasi Theology

Very few *adivasi* Christians have received formal theological education. Therefore, most of the theological writings on *adivasi* Christian life and practice comes from people who are not themselves *adivasis*.¹⁴⁶ There are preconceived notions that *adivasis* are not exposed to scientific and logical thinking, and are, therefore, incapable of any conceptualization and theologizing. This colonial bias has been responsible for resistance to the evolution of an *adivasi* theology in the seminaries.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, very few written works are available on *adivasi* theology.¹⁴⁸

Kujur identifies the methodological starting point of an *adivasi* theology: the gripping experience of brokenness and disorientation resulting from the exodus of *adivasis* due to displacement, migration, and exploitation, simultaneously accompanied by an orientation toward liberative and celebrative dimensions of life.¹⁴⁹ He further explains that the inseparability of religion and culture is the hallmark of *adivasi* theology. *Adivasi* religion is natural, demonstrative, and descriptive, with the divine manifesting itself in and through natural phenomena and social relationships. It is unlike the formal Christian theologizing, which is dogmatic, revelatory, and written. Inclusivity is another unique mark of *adivasi* world-view. There are interrelations between the supernatural and the natural. "The biggest contribution that *adivasi* theology can make to the world is its cosmo-centric vision making space for pluralism, justice, communion, and communitarianism," writes Kujur.¹⁵⁰

Jesus, the *Parmadivasi*

Following are few thoughts on Christology written by Francis Minj. Unfortunately, this is the only source we could trace on *adivasi* Christology. The author has creatively presented Jesus as the *Parmadivasi*.

Minj insists on the importance of interpreting Jesus Christ contextually in relation to *adivasi* life and culture. He interprets Jesus Christ as "*Paramadivasi*" in the context of five tribes in the state of Jharkhand in central India: Munda, Oraon, Kharia, Ho, and Santals. "*Paramadivasi*" is based on the three Sanskrit roots: "*param*" means "supreme"; "*âdi*" means "primordial"; and "*vasi*" means "dweller." "Just as the *adivasis* are the original dwellers, so too Jesus the word can be metaphorically construed as *Paramadivasi*, the Supreme Primordial Dweller, the image of the invisible God, and the firstborn of all creation (Col. 1:15)."¹⁵¹

Minj relates Jesus Christ to the custom of venerating ancestors as role models, protectors, and mediators between God and humans. As

firstborn of all creation, Jesus is “the greatest ancestor,” but he also revises the existing notion of ancestorship. He says, “Through his violent death Jesus challenges *Adivasi* cultural taboos. His murder would disqualify him ancestorship, but he defies the *Adivasi* taboo of denying ancestorship to those who die violently.”¹⁵²

Minj observes that the existing *adivasi* categories need reinterpretation if Christ is to be understood from an *adivasi* perspective. Traditionally, *adivasi* communities had no king or central ruling authority, but today they yearn for liberation from the dominant forces in society that enslave and demean them. He interprets Jesus Christ as the Liberator, “the voice of the voiceless” and the bringer of freedom: “Jesus Christ, the persecuted and the mutilated one, demonstrates his solidarity with the suffering *Adivasis*, instilling hope that their daily ‘death’ by exploitation will turn into liberation, if they follow his praxis.”¹⁵³ In traditional *Sarna dharm*¹⁵⁴ mythology, the horse is a symbol of “hostility, power, anti-life, and disharmony”; and Minj proposes in response that “Jesus Christ Liberator conquers the horse. A construal of Jesus as the highest, the noblest, and the best horse tamer, the one who forces the horse to acknowledge his Sonship, seems relevant.”¹⁵⁵ The images of Jesus as High Priest (*pahan*) and as Healer/Exorcist (*deonra*) also speak powerfully to *adivasi* society. In the *Sarna dharm*, the *pahan* offers sacrifices of animals or food to propitiate God, to establish harmony, and to gain protection from evil. The *pahan* also offers sacrifices to spirits. Minj interprets Jesus “as the highest *pahan*,” citing the Letter to the Hebrews.¹⁵⁶ There is an *adivasi* myth where God dies in disguise of a leprous boy to abolish sins; Minj suggests that Jesus transforms this myth and presents a new vision of salvation.¹⁵⁷

Exorcism is an important aspect of *adivasi* religiosity. Exorcists (*deonras*) protect from evil spirits, but these powerful figures can also do harm and thus are feared. Jesus as the divine exorcist is “a new kind of *deonra*.”¹⁵⁸ Indian society has long stigmatized the *adivasis*; Jesus’ touching of the sick and the “untouchables” in his society (Mk. 1:31, 1:41, 5:38–41, 8:22–25, 10:3; Lk. 6:19) is a very moving image for *adivasis*.¹⁵⁹ Minj concludes that the image of Jesus Christ as *Paramadivasi*, including the four roles of Ancestor, Liberator, Priest, and Healer, can effectively convey the gospel to the *adivasi* community.¹⁶⁰

End Notes

¹ Cf. Aloysius Pieris, *Fire and Water: Basic Issues in Asian Buddhism and Christianity* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1966), 66.

² Cf. M. D. David, ed. *Asia and Christianity* (Bombay: Himalaya Publishing

House, 1985), 9.

³ Cf. Muriel Orevillo-Montenegro, *The Jesus of Asian Women* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 11.

⁴ Pieris, *Fire and Water: Basic Issues in Asian Buddhism and Christianity*, 66.

⁵ Aloysius Pieris, *An Asian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 39.

⁶ For a detailed view on Hindu view of Jesus Christ refer to Samuel George, “The Significance of the Historical Particularity of Jesus: A Response to the Neo-Hindu View that Historicity of Jesus is Irrelevant but His Teachings are Important.” **Doctor of Theology**, Senate of Serampore College (University), India, 2010.

⁷ M. M. Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, Indian Theological Library, No. 4 (Madras: CLS, 1976), 122, 331.

⁸ Ibid., 155.

⁹ Robin H. S. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1994), 19–20.

¹⁰ Stanley J. Samartha, *Hindu Response to Unbound Christ* (Madras: CLS, 1974), 20.

¹¹ Ram Mohan Roy, *Second Appeal to the Christian Public in Defence of ‘The Precepts of Jesus’* (Calcutta: Baptist Mission Press, 1821), 12.

¹² Ibid., 19.

¹³ Cited in Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, 22.

¹⁴ M. Thomas Thangaraj, *The Crucified Guru: An Experiment in Cross-Cultural Christology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 71.

¹⁵ Samartha, *Hindu Response to Unbound Christ*, 35.

¹⁶ Quoted in Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, 24.

¹⁷ *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987), s.v. “Mohandas Gandhi.”

¹⁸ E. Stanley Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Interpretation* (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1948), 71.

¹⁹ B. Joseph Francis, “The Unpremeditated Communication Strategies Evolved By Mahatma Gandhi And What They Reveal To The Genuine Evangelizer,” *Indian Theological Studies* 41 (2004): 339.

²⁰ Margaret Chatterjee, *Gandhi’s Religious Thought*, Library of Philosophy and Religion (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1983), 54.

²¹ Jones, *Mahatma Gandhi: An Interpretation*, 70.

²² Margaret Chatterjee, “Gandhi and Christianity,” in *Gandhi’s Significance for Today*, ed. John Hick and Lamont C. Hempel (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1989), 153.

²³ Ibid., 154.

²⁴ B. Joseph Francis, “Gandhian Methodology of Means to Achieve an Aim and its Application to Evangelization,” *Indian Theological Studies* 35 (1998): 221–247; B. Joseph Francis, *Love in the Life and Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (New Delhi/Bangalore: Sterling Publishers/St. Peter’s Pontifical Institute of Theology, 1991).

²⁵ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958–2001), LXIV:326.

²⁶ Ibid., IV:4; XXXV:326,328.

²⁷ Ibid., XL:58.

- ²⁸ In a letter to Rev. M. Wells Branch, May 12, 1919, Bombay. Ibid., XV:304-305.
- ²⁹ K. L. S. Rao, "Mahatma Gandhi and Christianity," in *Neo-Hindu Views of Christianity* ed. Arvind Sharma (Leiden/New York/København/Köln: E. J. Brill, 1988), 143.
- ³⁰ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiment with Truth* (Ahmedabad: Navajivan Publishing House, 2002), 33.
- ³¹ Rao, "Mahatma Gandhi and Christianity," 143.
- ³² Ibid., 145.
- ³³ Gandhi, *The Story of My Experiment with Truth*, 136.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 63-64.
- ³⁵ M. K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ*, ed. Anand T. Hingorani (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidhya Bhawan, 1963), 8.
- ³⁶ Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, XXXV:464.
- ³⁷ Ibid., XLVIII:438.
- ³⁸ Ibid., XXXIV:261.
- ³⁹ M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, May 12, 1920.
- ⁴⁰ M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, January 19, 1921.
- ⁴¹ M. K. Gandhi, *Young India*, December, 31, 1931.
- ⁴² M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, April 28, 1946.
- ⁴³ M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, June 30, 1946.
- ⁴⁴ M. K. Gandhi, *Harijan*, December 7, 1947.
- ⁴⁵ A commonly used term among the Hindus as a synonym for god. Gandhi used the word *Harijan* (people of God) for the untouchables. Upadhyaya uses it in a similar sense.
- ⁴⁶ Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, 78.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 80.
- ⁴⁸ *Gita* IV, 7:8.
- ⁴⁹ M. M. Thomas, "Indian Theology," in *Dictionary of Mission: Theology*, ed. Karl Müller (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 206.
- ⁵⁰ Animananda cited in Martin Jarrett-Kerr, *Patterns of Christian Acceptance: Individual Response to the Missionary Impact 1550-1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), 219.
- ⁵¹ Cf. Orevillo-Montenegro, *The Jesus of Asian Women*, 24. Refer for a detailed study on Upadhyaya Julius Lipner and George Gispert-Sauch, eds., *The Writings of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay*, vol. 1 & 2 (Bangalore: The United Theological College, 1991); Julius J. Lipner, *Brahmabandhab Upadhyay. The Life and Thought of a Revolutionary* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999); Julius J. Lipner, "Brahmabandhab Upadhyay (1861-1907) and His Significance for Our Times," *Vidyajyoti Journal of Theological Reflection* 71, no. 3 (May 2007): 165-184; Timothy C. Tennent, *Building Christianity on Indian Foundations: The Legacy of Brahmabandhab Upadhyay* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2000); Philip Benjamin Thomas, "The Use of *Saccidananda*, *Avatara* and *Moksha* for the Interpretation of the Doctrines of the Trinity, Incarnation, and Salvation With Special Reference to Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, Vengal Chakkarai, and Aiyadurai Jesudasan Appasamy" (Doctor of Philosophy, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2000); Brahmabandhab Upadhyay, "Christ's Claim to Attention," *Journal of Indian Theology* 1, no. 1 (January-April 2008): 5-8.
- ⁵² Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*, 109-10.

- ⁵³ Ibid., 99, 111.
- ⁵⁴ Orevillo-Montenegro, *The Jesus of Asian Women*, 24.
- ⁵⁵ For a detailed view of his theology, refer to P. T. Thomas, *The Theology of Chakkarai*, Confessing the Faith in India Series - No. 2 (Bangalore: CISRS, 1968).
- ⁵⁶ Vengal Chakkarai, "The Historical Jesus and the Christ of Experience," in *Readings in Indian Christian Theology*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah and Cecil Hargreaves (Delhi: ISPCK, 2009), 79.
- ⁵⁷ Ibid., 82.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid.
- ⁵⁹ Orevillo-Montenegro, *The Jesus of Asian Women*, 25.
- ⁶⁰ Cf. A. J. Appasamy, *Christianity as Bhakti Marga: A Study of the Johannine Doctrine of Love* (Madras: CLS, 1928); A. J. Appasamy, *What is Moksa? A Study in the Johannine Doctrine of Love* (Madras: CLS, 1931); A. J. Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage* (London: SPCK, 1942); A. J. Appasamy, "Messengers of Christ Today," in *Presenting Christ to India today: Three Addresses and a Sermon delivered to the Synod of the C. S. I* (Tiruchirapalli: C. S. I, 1956).
- ⁶¹ Appasamy, *The Gospel and India's Heritage*, 259.
- ⁶² For a detailed study refer Robin H. S. Boyd, "The Philosophical Context of Indian Christian Theology with Special Reference to P. Chenchiah," in *Indian Voices in Today's Theological Debate*, ed. Horst Burkler and Wolfgang M. W. Roth (Lucknow: Lucknow Publishing House, 1972), 47-69; P. Chenchiah, "The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World. A Review of Dr. Kraemer's Book," in *Rethinking Christianity in India*, ed. G. V. Job and et al (Madras: A. N. Sudarisanam, 1938); P. Chenchiah, "The Vedanta Philosophy and the Message of Christ," *Indian Journal of Theology* 4, no. 2 (December, 1955): 18-23; D. A. Thangasamy, *The Theology of Chenchiah With Selections from his Writings*, Confessing Faith in India Series No. 1 (Bangalore: CISRS, 1966); D. A. Thangasamy, "Significance of Chenchiah and His Thought," *Religion and Society* X, no. 3 (September 1963): 27-35; P. Chenchiah, "Wherein Lies the Uniqueness of Christ? An Indian Christian View," in *Readings in Indian Christian Theology*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah and Cecil Hargreaves (Delhi: ISPCK, 1929), 83-92. Also a very good work on Chenchiah, O. V. Jathanna, *The Decisiveness of the Christ-event and the Universality of Christianity in a World of Religious Plurality: With Special Reference to Hendrick Kraemer and Alfred Geroge Hogg as well as to William Ernest Hocking and Pandipeddi Chenchiah* (Berne, Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1981).
- ⁶³ Chenchiah, "Wherein Lies the Uniqueness of Christ? An Indian Christian View," 83.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 90.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 92.
- ⁶⁶ Inclusivism holds that religions may have some sparks of God's revelation only because the Christ of Christianity operates secretly in them. Cf. Orevillo-Montenegro, *The Jesus of Asian Women*, 27.
- ⁶⁷ An inclination to evaluate reality exclusively in terms of human values. Cf. Ibid.
- ⁶⁸ Chenchiah, "Wherein Lies the Uniqueness of Christ? An Indian Christian View," 89.
- ⁶⁹ Orevillo-Montenegro, *The Jesus of Asian Women*, 28.

- ⁷⁰ For a detailed view refer Paul D. Devanandan, "The India We Live In," in *Presenting Christ to India today: Three Addresses and a Sermon delivered to the Synod of the C. S. I* (Tiruchirapalli: C. S. I, 1956), 1-26; Paul D. Devanandan, *The Gospel and Renascent Hinduism*, IMC Research Pamphlets No. 8 (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1959); Paul D. Devanandan, *Christian Concern in Hinduism* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1961); Paul D. Devanandan, *Preparation for Dialogue* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1964); Paul D. Devanandan, "Called to Witness," *NCCR LXXXII*, no. 1 (January 1962): 29-39; S. J. Samartha and Nalini Devanandan, eds., *I Will Lift Up Mine Eyes Unto The Hills: Sermons and Bible Studies of P. D. Devanandan* (Bangalore: CISRS, 1963); Joachim Wietzke, ed. *Paul D. Devanandan: A Selection* (Madras: CLS, 1983).
- ⁷¹ Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, 186.
- ⁷² *Ibid.*, 187.
- ⁷³ *Ibid.*, 187-88.
- ⁷⁴ Wietzke, ed. *Paul D. Devanandan: A Selection*, 105.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 107.
- ⁷⁶ Devanandan, *Christian Concern in Hinduism*, 91.
- ⁷⁷ Devanandan, *Preparation for Dialogue*, 166.
- ⁷⁸ M. M. Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation: Some Crucial Issues of the Theology of Mission in India* (Madras: CLS, 1971); M. M. Thomas, *Man and the Universe of Faiths* (Madras: Christian Literature Service, 1975); Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*; M. M. Thomas, "The Secular Ideologies of India and the Secular Meaning of Christ," in *Readings in Indian Christian Theology*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah and Cecil Hargreaves (Delhi: ISPCK, 2009); M. M. Thomas, "Christology and Pluralistic Consciousness," in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (July 1986); M. M. Thomas, "Christ-Centred Syncretism," *Religion and Society* XXVI, no. 1 (March 1979): 26-35; M. M. Thomas, "Indian Christian Theology, The Church and The People," *Religion and Society* XXX, no. 3&4 (Sept.-Dec. 1983): 72-75; M. M. Thomas and P. T. Thomas, *Towards an Indian Christian Theology: Life and Thought of Some Pioneers* (Tiruvalla: New Day Publications, 1992).
- ⁷⁹ Thomas, "The Secular Ideologies of India and the Secular Meaning of Christ," 93.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 99, 100.
- ⁸¹ Raimundo Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism. Towards an Ecumenical Christophany*, Revised and enlarged ed. (Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 1982).
- ⁸² Samartha, *Hindu Response to Unbound Christ*,
- ⁸³ Rahner said, "Anonymous Christianity means that a person lives in the grace of God and attains salvation outside of explicitly constituted Christianity... Let us say, a Buddhist monk... who, because he follows his conscience, attains salvation and lives in the grace of God; of him I must say that he is an anonymous Christian; if not, I would have to presuppose that there is a genuine path to salvation that really attains that goal, but that simply has nothing to do with Jesus Christ. But I cannot do that. And so, if I hold if everyone depends upon Jesus Christ for salvation, and if at the same time I hold that many live in the world who have not expressly recognized Jesus Christ, then there remains in my opinion nothing else but to take up this postulate of an anonymous Christianity." Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons,

- eds., *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965-1982* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1988), 135. For a good appraisal of Rahner's 'Anonymous Christianity' cf. Gavin D'Costa, "Karl Rahner's Anonymous Christian - A Reappraisal," *Modern Theology* 1, no. 2 (January 1985): 131-148.
- ⁸⁴ Thomas, *The Acknowledged Christ of the Indian Renaissance*,
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- ⁸⁶ Thomas, "The Secular Ideologies of India and the Secular Meaning of Christ," 98-99.
- ⁸⁷ Cf. M. M. Thomas, *Some Theological Dialogues* (Madras: CLS, 1977), 42-65.
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- ⁹² Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, 31-51.
- ⁹³ Kappen, "Towards an Indian Theology of Liberation," 30.
- ⁹⁴ Cf. Kappen, "Jesus and Transculturation," 173 ff.
- ⁹⁵ Kappen, *Jesus and Freedom*, 130.
- ⁹⁶ Kappen, "Jesus and Transculturation," 184, 185.
- ⁹⁷ Kalagara Subba Rao, *The Outpouring of My Heart*, ed. C. D. Airan, trans., C. D. Airan (Guntur, Andhra Pradesh: Shrimanthi Paripati Sita Mahalakshmi Satya Narayan, 1964); Kalagara Subba Rao, *Three Letters: Become Christ, Don't Pray, Man Created God* (Hyderabad: Hyderabad Reception Committee, 1965); Kalagara Subba Rao, *Retreat Padre*, Second ed. (Machilipatnam: n. p., 1972); Kalagara Subba Rao, *Gurudev, Where Can I Get So Many Mill-Stones?* (Munipalle: n. p., n. d.); Kalagara Subba Rao, *Translations of the New Songs* (n. p.: Vijayawada, n. d.). A good work on Subba Rao, Richard Leroy Hivner Jr., "Exploring the Depths of the Mystery of Christ: The Life and Work of K. Subba Rao of Andhra Pradesh, South India, with Special Reference to His Songs" (University of South Africa, 2004). Also K. P. Aleaz, *Christian Thought Through Advaita Vedanta*, ISPCK Contextual Theological Education Series, 001 (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1996), 45-62.
- ⁹⁸ Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, 274.
- ⁹⁹ C. D. Airan, K. Subba Rao, *the Mystic of Munipalle* (Secunderabad: n. p., n.d.), 159.
- ¹⁰⁰ Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, 275.
- ¹⁰¹ Rao, *Translations of the New Songs*, 20. Quoted in Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, 273.
- ¹⁰² Kaj Baago, *The Movement Around Subba Rao: A Study of the Hindu-Christian Movement around K. Subba Rao in Andhra Pradesh* (Madras: CLS, 1968),

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- ¹⁰⁴ Thomas, *Salvation and Humanisation: Some Crucial Issues of the Theology of Mission in India*, 40.
- ¹⁰⁵ Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, 278.
- ¹⁰⁶ James Massey, *Towards Dalit Hermeneutics* (Delhi: ISPCK, 1994), 1.
- ¹⁰⁷ Arvind P. Nirmal, *Heuristic Explorations* (Madras: The Christian Literature Society, 1990), 139.
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- ¹⁰⁹ Kothapalli Wilson, *The Twice-Alienated: Culture of Dalit Christians* (Hyderabad: Booklinks Cooperation, 1982), 59.
- ¹¹⁰ Arvind P. Nirmal, "Doing Theology from a Dalit Perspective," in *A Reader in Dalit Theology*, ed. Arvind P. Nirmal (Chennai: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute, 1991), 143.
- ¹¹¹ M. E. Prabhakar, "The Search for a Dalit Theology," *ibid.*, 47.
- ¹¹² Arvind P. Nirmal, "Doing Theology from a Dalit Perspective," *ibid.*, 142-43.
- ¹¹³ Methodologically traditional Indian Christian theologies were inclined towards Hindu Brahmanic traditions.
- ¹¹⁴ Prabhakar, "The Search for a Dalit Theology," 47.
- ¹¹⁵ Peniel Rajkumar, *Dalit Theology and Dalit Liberation: Problems, Paradigms and Possibilities* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2010), 51.
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- ¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 227.
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- ¹²⁴ *Ibid.*
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- ¹²⁶ www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/.../workshop_data_background.docx (accessed May 22, 2013).
- ¹²⁷ Wati Longchar, "Tribes in Northeast India," in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of South Asian Christianity*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 698.
- ¹²⁸ Wati Longchar, "Tribal Theology: Development, Issues and Challenges," *Journal of Tribal Studies* XVII, no. 1 (January-June 2012): 2.
- ¹²⁹ Niramli Minz and Wati Longchar, "Tribal Christian Theology/Theologizing," in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of South Asian Christianity*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 695.
- ¹³⁰ Hukato N. Shohe, "Imaging Christ from Tribal Perspective," in *Tribal Voice*, ed. V. Anshely Sumi (Dimapur: Aloino Centre, 2007), 31.

- ¹³¹ An interesting work from a Mizo perspective is L. H. Lalpekhlu, *Contextual Christology: A Tribal Perspective* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2007). Lalpekhlu attempts to recover some liberating tribal concepts by reinterpreting the significance of Jesus Christ, using a Mizo conceptual framework of *pasaltha*. He argues that Jesus' life and ministry, His incarnation, His suffering and His death, can all be seen in Mizo context as manifesting the principle of *tlawmngaihna*, which is an essential characteristics of *pasaltha*. Jesus' resurrection and exaltation can be seen as God's response to Jesus' person and work precisely as *pasaltha-tlawmngai*. Similarly the kingdom of God, which defined and summed up Jesus' message and mission, can be perceived among tribal Christians as exhibiting the qualities of a communitarian society.
- ¹³² An interesting Christological dialogue from north-east India tribal context is: Visakulie Vakha, "Jesus Christ in Tribal Theology: A Critique," in *Perspectives: Current Issues in Theological Thinking*, ed. Akheto Sumi (Mokokchung: Jongshinokdang Trust, CTC, 2002), 64-81; A. Wati Longchar, "Jesus Christ in Tribal Theology: A Critique - A Response," *Journal of Tribal Studies* VII, no. 2 (July-December 2003): 249-89.
- ¹³³ Dr. Yangkahao Vashum teaches indigenous/tribal theology at Eastern Theological College, Jorhat.
- ¹³⁴ Yangkahao Vashum, "Emerging Vision of Indigenous/Tribal Theology," in *Dalit - Tribal Theological Interface: Current Trends in Subaltern Theologies*, ed. James Massey and Shimreingam Shimray (Jorhat & New Delhi: Tribal Study Centre/Women Study Centre & Centre for Dalit/Subaltern Studies, 2007), 40-1.
- ¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 42.
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- ¹⁴⁴ Joseph Marianus Kujur, "Indigenous Peoples: Their Identity and Struggle," in *Taking Text to Context: A Festschrift in Honor of Fr. T. K. John, S. J. on the Occasion of his 75th Birth Anniversary*, ed. George Keerankeri and V. P. Srivastava (Delhi: ISPCK & Vidyajyoti College of Theology, 2011), 223-24.
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- ¹⁴⁶ Leo D. Lefebure, "Catholics on the Margins in India: Dalits and Adivasis," *Claritas: Journal of Dialogue & Culture* 2, no. 1 (March 2013): 41.
- ¹⁴⁷ Joseph Marianus Kujur, "Adivasi Theology," in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of South Asian Christianity*, ed. Roger E. Hedlund (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).
- ¹⁴⁸ A good work on Adivasi theology is Hippoletus Toppo, *Towards an Adivasi Liberative Theology: A Critique of Liberative Praxis with Special References to S. Rayan, S. Kappen and M. M. Thomas* (Rome: Pontificia Universitas Urbaniana, Facultas Theologiae, 2009). Few thoughts are also found in

Leonard Fernando and G. Gispert-Sauch, *Christianity in India: Two Thousand Years of Faith* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004), 192-9. Also Jhakmak Neeraj Ekka, "Indigenous Christian Theology: Questions and Directions in Making," *Bangalore Theological Forum* XXXIX, no. 1 (June 2007): 102-25. Kujur, "Adivasi Theology," 6.

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¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Francis Minj, "Jesus Christ Paramâdivâsi: An Indian Âdivâsi Construal of Jesus Christ," in *Jesus of Galilee: Contextual Christology for the 21st Century*, ed. Robert Lassalle-Klein (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2011), 189-90.

¹⁵² Ibid., 191.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 194.

¹⁵⁴ The religious beliefs held by tribes in the state of Jharkhand.

¹⁵⁵ Minj, "Jesus Christ Paramâdivâsi: An Indian Âdivâsi Construal of Jesus Christ," 195.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 196.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 197.

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¹⁶⁰ Lefebure, "Catholics on the Margins in India: Dalits and Adivasis," 42.

CHAPTER IX

Emerging Christologies from the Margins

Latin American Liberation Context

Twentieth century gave rise to a very important theological formulation: Latin American Liberation Theology, also known as ‘theology of liberation,’ or simply ‘liberation theology.’¹ It was developed primarily among the Roman Catholic theologians and clergy, but over the years it has influenced the Christendom in a very tangible manner. It seeks to view all of theology and Church practice through a contextual lens – that is, through ‘the eyes of the poor’ in Latin America; thus, it is a theology which both critical and reality-based. “Because the theology of liberation is a Christian theology, it is thoroughly Christological” writes Bohache.² The three major themes of liberation theology are: preferential option for the poor; the political situation as ‘sin’; and centrality of the reign of God.

Over the years liberation theologians have developed an elaborate Christological structure.³ In the following section, we present a general view of liberation Christology.

A Christology of Liberation

There are two important things that one notice in liberation Christology: first, the ecclesial setting of this Christology (in the Church) and its praxis (among the people) differentiate it from Christologies that are more theoretical. Second, it employs the same information about Jesus as classical Christology, but interprets it differently. Instead of spiritualizing Christ in Jesus, it gives the ‘facts’ about Jesus a material interpretation in order to arrive at ways of seeing the Christ and his salvific power not only in the human Jesus but in every person.⁴

Liberation Christology is rooted in historical Jesus and in the people’s pain, because the decision to follow Jesus must give rise to praxis.⁵ It is also suspicious of Christology that is mediated by the church, because they compare it to what they see as the ‘ignoring’ of Christ’s

values by Christians.⁶ Traditional Christology in Latin America has failed for the following reasons: Christ was presented as (1) an abstraction, (2) as universal reconciliation, and (3) as absolute rather than dialectical. An abstract Christ cannot be meaningful to the suffering communities; universality is meaningless without a sense of particularity; and, emphasis on the absoluteness of Christ leads to the maintaining of the absoluteness of status quo, resulting in a deepening of the hopelessness that is already felt by most of the Latin American people.⁷

Liberation Christology (ies) is not a monolithic Christology but there are several common emphases in the various Christologies. Commonalities in Liberation Christologies:⁸

- *God in Christ enters into utmost solidarity with the poor.*
- *The sin that keeps people in bondage and the salvation that frees them have both personal and political dimensions.*
- *When Christology is done self-consciously in a situation of oppression, it becomes imperative and urgent to distinguish faith from dehumanizing ideologies.*
- *Christology is inseparably linked to Christian praxis.*

There is a stress on the historical Jesus over the Christ of faith for the following reasons:⁹

- There is a structural similarity between the situation of Jesus' day and those in our own time. It sees objective oppression and dependence lived out subjectively as contrary to God's historical design.
- Historical Jesus puts us in direct contact with his liberative program and the practices with which he implements it.
- Historical Jesus sheds light on the chief elements of Christological faith: i.e., following his life and his cause in our Christian life.
- Historical Jesus reveals the Father and how to reach that Father. Abstract reflection (theory) does not provide us that access.
- Historical Jesus fosters a critique of humanity and society as they appear historically. The historical Jesus signifies a crisis, not a justification, for the world. He calls for a transformation rather than an explanation.

Christology from Afro-American/Black Context

Christology from the perspective of the black especially from African American context is known as Black Christology. These approaches address Christology in light of the challenges faced by people of African descent. The defining context of African-American, or black Christology

is race.¹⁰ It developed within the discipline of black theology, which arose in the 1960s as a religious response to the white racism against black Americans.¹¹

Black theology was first articulated by James Cone (1938 -).¹² He was of the opinion that traditional Christian theology had been complicit in perpetuating a white supremacist theology that continued to enslave the blacks in America. He argued that a black theology is the only hope for improving the plight of black Americans by means of the Christian gospel.¹³ He further states that a theology can be 'Christian' only when it is liberative, for Christ Jesus was involved in liberation of all people.¹⁴ Cone also says, "Any statement that divorces salvation from liberation or makes human freedom independent of divine freedom must be rejected."¹⁵ Sin of racism is the 'original sin of America,'¹⁶ and Jesus Christ came to liberate blacks from racism.¹⁷ He opines that Christian theological exposition has been the prerogative of the whites in the West, and unfortunately Christianity has justified black suffering.

Black theology is related to the idea of liberation. James Cone, defines liberation as working so, "that the community of the oppressed will recognize that its inner thrust for liberation is not only consistent with the gospel but is the gospel of Jesus Christ."¹⁸ Starting point of black Christology is black experience.

Black Christ

It was in 1963, Malcolm X who asserted, "Christ wasn't white. Christ was a black man."¹⁹ However, it was in 1968, the first treatise on Black Christ came out.²⁰ Unlike other black Christological formulations which articulates Christ's blackness in metaphorical terms, Cleage argues that Jesus was historically and ethnically black. He saw his blackness as literal, resulting from black blood that the Israelites had acquired during their sojourn in Egypt.²¹ The Synoptic Gospels portrayed a black Jesus whose radical message was then 'spiritualized' by the apostle Paul, who 'modified his teachings to conform to the pagan white gentiles.'²² Recent studies have suggested that there may be some truths in Cleage's assertion, even though it sounds to be 'controversial.'

In contrast to Cleage, Cone favours a metaphorical approach to black Christ.²³ He likes to base his Christology on the 'historical Jesus' – the 'one who he was.'²⁴ Parallels can be drawn and comparisons made between Jesus' context and the contemporary situation of the oppressed black. For Cone, the most important characteristic of the historical Jesus is his identification with the poor of his time, and therefore he is able to interpret Jesus' solidarity with the poor and oppressed Christologically

as the hermeneutical key for imaging Jesus as black. Cone writes, "If he is not black as we are, then the resurrection has little significance for our times. Indeed, he cannot be what we are, we cannot be who he is."²⁵

Cone writes,

The authenticity of the New Testament Jesus guarantees the integrity of his human presence with the poor and the wretched in the struggle for freedom. In Jesus' presence with the poor in Palestine, he disclosed who they were and what they were created to be (Heb. 2:17-18). Likewise, we today can lay claim on the same humanity that was liberated through Jesus' cross and resurrection. Because Jesus lived, we now know that servitude is inhuman, and that Christ has set us free to live as liberated sons and daughters of God. Unless Jesus was truly like us, then we have no reason to believe that our true humanity is disclosed in his person. Without Jesus' humanity constituted in real history, we have no basis to contend that his coming bestows upon us the courage and the wisdom to struggle against injustice and oppression.²⁶

Cone further says, "Because human liberation is God's work of salvation in Jesus Christ, its source and meaning cannot be separated from Christology's sources (Scripture, tradition, and social existence) and content (Jesus in his past, present, and future)."²⁷ Jesus Christ, therefore, in his humanity and divinity, is the point of departure for a black theologian's analysis of the meaning of liberation. This can be said of any theology of liberation also. There is no liberation independent of Jesus' past, present and future coming.²⁸ He is the ground for freedom to struggle in the present context and also the source of hope that the vision disclosed in the historical fight against oppression will be fully realized in God's future.

God in Jesus Christ wills to be in relation to creatures in their social context thereby fulfilling their humanity. Cone calls this "God is free to be for us."²⁹ God in Jesus Christ calls the helpless and weak into a newly created existence. God not only fights for them but takes their humiliated condition upon the divine Person and thereby breaks open a new future for the poor, different from their past and present miseries.³⁰ Jesus becomes the ground of their liberation.

Womanist Christology

Womanist/Feminist theology

Patriarchy's delimiting position of women both in the society and religious spheres have raised fundamental questions about women and Christology. Many womanist theologians have expressed discomfort with the "maleness" of Jesus, since maleness is often used to justify

oppression. Womanist theologians point to "slave-holding Christianity," which saw no contradiction in following Christ and at the same time "owning" people and treating them as inferior creatures. They point to both whites and coloured, who followed a patriarchal Jesus and see no contradiction in segregation and even in the exclusion of women in their own churches. They also point to the many coloured women today who have become victims of the male-defined/designed welfare system that renders them powerless.³¹

There are diverse Christologies among women doing Christology. "Women of colour have sought to differentiate their theological thinking from that of white, middle-class feminists" write Bohache.³² Women's movements since the 1970s have argued that their voices too to be included in any theorizing. Apparently white feminist theologizing was not inclusive of all the voices. There was an increasing demand to include the voices and views of women from the Two-Third World.³³ Poverty, multiple oppression, and tokenism are common experience of Third World women folks. The Third world is a cross-ridden universe of economic, political, and religio-cultural oppressions within which universe of economic, political, and religio-cultural oppressions within which women are doubly or triply burdened.³⁴

Fabella and Oduyoye defines the methodology of womanist theologies:

A key requisite of our methodology is that our reflections are done by Third World women ourselves. Our theology must speak of our struggles and the faith that empowers us. ... [It] goes beyond the personal to encompass the community, and beyond gender to embrace humanity in its integrity. ... [It] takes cognizance of academic studies but insists on the wider spectrum of women's experience and reality for its inspirations and insights. ... [It] has embraced the religio-cultural besides the socio-economic [context] and has engaged it in a living dialogue. ..., it is a dialogue of life which forms part of our daily experience. Theologizing in the light of our Christian faith, we have learned to appreciate the insights and spirituality of other faiths and seek avenues for interfaith dialogue, not just to enrich Christian theology but as a community responsibility owed to all people of faith.

Liberation of all men and women from whatever binds them, both internally and externally is the focus and goal of womanist theologies. Christian womanist theological methodology needs to be informed by at least four elements: (1) a multi-dialogical intent, (2) a liturgical intent, (3) a didactic intent, and (4) a commitment both to reason and to the validity of female imagery and metaphorical language in the construction

of theological statements.³⁵

Christologies of Women of Colour

Coloured women around the world doing Christology is called womanist Christology. For our purpose, we focus on the Asian context. Asian context is very unique: it is the context of diversity, colonial past, poverty, multi-religiosity, caste, and culture. Christ is one among the many christs in Asia. Asian women's Christology therefore, emerges out of the creative tension between religious-cultural and Western imperialism. Women makes up one quarter of world's population; majority of them live in abject poverty in Asia.

Womanist Christology in the Asian context takes into account the patriarchal, racial, casteist, and economic oppression along with cruelty of 'sex tourism.' These women of colour uses an 'epistemology of the broken body' to understand the nature of God, the nature of humanity and, ultimately, the nature of Christ; their brokenness, pain and suffering cannot be extracted from their theological pursuits because it is such an integral part of their social location, which is 'the major element of their life experiences.'³⁶ God in Jesus Christ is defined by their existential experiences: God is found in community, in nature and in history; God is a life-giving Spirit – an all-inclusive reality who returns Asian women to their personal power.³⁷ This God in Jesus Christ talks to Asian women, listens to their story, and weeps with them. This God in Jesus Christ makes them aware of the dangers of sex tourism, neo-colonialism, militarism, poverty, casteism, Christian superiority and triumphalism. Womanist Christology thus is a stand against every demeaning and oppressive structures that refuse to acknowledge the equal participation of men and women in all aspects of life and religiosity. Kyung rightly points out: "In Asian women's perspective, knowledge of self leads to a knowledge of God. In their suffering, Asian women meet God, who in turn discloses that they were created in the divine image, full and equal participants in the community with men."³⁸

Even among Womanist theologians there are diverse natures of Christologies.³⁹ The suffering of Jesus and its relation to the suffering of women is of prime importance for womanist Christologies. Jesus is not seen as a passive victim but sees his suffering as an inevitable product of oppression. His suffering is an act of solidarity with all who suffer: Like Jesus' suffering, women's suffering too has salvific value.⁴⁰ Asian womanist Christologies reject traditional Christologies as they have projected and propagated a colonial Christology. Jesus was presented as the 'Lord of all.' These were done at a time of domination by the rulers

and probably to justify it.⁴¹

In the Indian context some womanist theologians have portrayed Jesus as the feminine principle embodied in a man; he incarnated *Shakti*, the harmonious principle uniting dualism.⁴² In the context of Korean Minjung theology, Jesus is seen as a priest of or *shaman*. People are in the grip of *han* (negative energy in the universe that oppresses people) and Jesus as a *shaman* (they are mostly women, therefore, it is a feminine Christological image) undo the *han* and restore humanity to peace and tranquillity. Chung reinterprets the understanding of 'Suffering Servant' from a womanist perspective. Jesus' self-respect remained intact even in the midst of suffering, this leads the womanist to reclaim the lost ground of their self-respect.⁴³ Some suggest that it was the women in Jesus' life who helped him to understand and embrace his role as a suffering servant and thereby to become Christ.⁴⁴

Minjung Christology

Minjung Theology is a Korean contextual theology. The term *Minjung* may be used for all those who are excluded from the elite who enjoy prestigious positions. The *Minjung* are those people who have suffered from exploitation, poverty; socio-political oppression, and cultural repression throughout the ages. They know the pain of dehumanization. Their lives; have been rooted in the age-old experience of suffering and the present experience 'of it. They have been treated as non-beings by their rulers. Yet they have not given in but resisted the oppression of their rulers. They have suffered for changing Korea into a just nation.

Byung Mu Ahn (1922-96), a Korean New Testament scholar and a key figure in the development of *Minjung* (the masses, the *anawim*, the *ochlos*, the crowd, rather than the elite) theology has explained the importance of Christology from the *Minjung's* perspective.⁴⁵

Christology of the kerygma has distorted our understanding of Jesus. He has been turned into Christ of faith/kerygma. Synoptic gospels give a different picture of the earthly Jesus.

- Jesus is in non-stop action. He refuses to be the Messiah, the Son of God, the pre-existent Being, the exalted Christ on a throne, the coming Judge. He is not bound by religious norms of his time.
- He associates and lives with the *Minjung*. He eats, drinks, asks favours from them, and grants their requests. "Where there is Jesus, there is the *Minjung*. And where there is the *Minjung*, there is Jesus."

The gospel image of Jesus is different from the *kerygmatic* Christ.

His agony at Gethsemane, his cry on the Cross reflects such an image. The healing stories portrays a very important image of Jesus of the *Minjung*. The Jesus who heals the sick people is not someone who fulfils a pre-established programme. He never healed anyone voluntarily or with some pre-plan. The request for healing always came from the *Minjung*. And he obliged to the wishes of the patients. The sick too the initiative for events to happen. His healing power, which has a functional relation to the suffering of the *Minjung*, can be realized only when it is met by the willing of the *Minjung*.⁴⁶

Jesus is the spokesperson for the *Minjung*. He speaks to God on behalf of them.

He is the Christ who is facing God from human being's side not the other way round. Human beings are not an abstract entity but concrete *Minjung* who are suffering. Therefore the Jesus who is one with the *Minjung*, facing God from their direction – *he is Christ*. He identifies himself with the *Minjung*. He exists for no other than for the *Minjung*.

Is Jesus the saviour of the humankind? Salvation is not a manufactured product given to human beings from heaven for their liberation, but the liberation Jesus realized in the action of transforming himself, by listening to and responding to the cry of the *Minjung*.

Jesus the environmentalist (Eco-theology and Christology)

Ecological crisis and Christology is an important area of study in Christian theology. It is important to note that Jesus did not face the magnitude of global destruction that we face today. Hill portrays an environmentalistic picture of Jesus,

The gospel portrays Jesus as a man of the earth, a Jew devoted to the Hebrew tradition that the earth is the Lord's and has been given to his people as a good gift. He grew up among people who prayed: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1).

[He] spent most of his life in a rural area known for its natural beauty. His later teachings reflect his appreciation for his Abba's creation. Jesus uses fruit, mustard seeds, salt, the sun, lightning, rain, fish, sheep, and other natural images to demonstrate the presence and power of the reign of God.

In the Sermon on the Mount... Jesus points to both wildflowers and birds as examples of how God's love and care are extended to creation. ... [In] the parables Jesus demonstrates a sacramental sensitivity to the revelation of God's saving power as discovered in sown seeds, harvests, vineyards, and flocks of sheep.

.... Jesus warns that deprivation is brought about by those who selfishly protect their riches and store up treasures. His own simple lifestyle proclaims the lesson, "Take less and give more!"

The natural miracles, such as the walking on the water and the calming of the storm, are symbolic of God's power over creation.

....

The healing miracles ... demonstrate God's desire for healing and wholeness. These stories teach that much physical and moral wrong results from human ignorance or evil, and should not be ascribed to a vindictive creator. In the gospels, we meet a God who moves powerfully against all that subverts creation. We encounter a God who intends that the resources of creation be healed, sustained, and shared.⁴⁷

The doctrine of incarnation teaches that God entered the real material world and became a human being: "The Word became flesh, and lived among us" (John 1:14).

John Duns Scotus (-1308) proposed that the incarnation was in God's plan from the beginning and represents a climatic stage of creation. Accordingly, the divine goal for creation was to be fulfilled in the birth of Jesus and would then move toward an ongoing re-creation of all reality through Christ. Therefore, Christ is the creative force behind a new creation, which is taking place now and which will reach its completion in the end time.

Incarnation brought a new dignity for materiality. Matter is to be valued and respected not just used and discarded. The dualism between spiritual and material is overcome.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (-1955) maintains that matter is blessed, and Christ is the heart and centre of the world, and continues to be revealed through matter. The earth is the body of Christ.

For Karl Rahner, Christ is the perfect union of the material and the spiritual. Incarnation is the point of this perfection.

The concept of Cosmic Christ place Jesus Christ in the context of the cosmos. Paul writes, "...he set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Eph. 1:9-10). He further writes, "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominations or rulers or power – all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Col. 1:15-17). Such an understanding integrates creation and salvation. Salvation therefore comes within history for the whole of creation.

For Teilhard this cosmic image of Christ is in continuity with the historical and risen Lord, who exercises a divine power within the universe and draws it toward its final completion and fulfilment. This convergence of all reality would be brought about by the power of Christ's love.⁴⁸

End Notes

- ¹ Berryman opines that this term was first used by Peruvian priest and theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez Merino in a talk given at Chimbote, Peru, in July 1968. Phillip Berryman, *Liberation Theology: The Essential Facts About the Revolutionary Movement in Latin America and Beyond* (Oak Park, Illinois: Meyer Stone Books, 1987), 24.
- ² Thomas Bohache, *Christology from the Margins* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 81.
- ³ For detailed study on Liberation Christology see: Leonardo Boff, *Jesus Christ Liberator. A Critical Christology for Our Time*, trans., Patrick Hughes, 3 ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1981); Leonardo Boff, "A Christology Based on the Nazarene," *Voices from the Third World* XXX, no. 1 (June 2007); José Míguez Bonino, "Who is Jesus Christ in Latin America Today?," in *Faces of Jesus: Latin American Christologies*, ed. José Míguez Bonino (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984); José Míguez Bonino, ed. *Faces of Jesus: Latin American Christologies* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985); Carlos Bravo, "Jesus of Nazareth, Christ the Liberator," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, ed. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996); José M De Mesa, "Making Salvation Concrete and Jesus Real: Trends in Asian Christology," *Exchange* 30, no. 1 (2001); Virgilio Elizondo, *Galilean Journey: The Mexican-American Promise* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985); Segundo Galilea, *Following Jesus* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1981); Juan Luis Segundo, *The Historical Jesus of the Synoptics* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1985); Juan Luis Segundo, *An Evolutionary Approach to Jesus of Nazareth*, trans., John Drury, vol. V (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988); Juan Luis Segundo, "Christ and the Human Being," *Cross Currents* 36, no. 1 (Spring 1986); Jon Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, trans., John Drury (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1978); Jon Sobrino, *Jesus in Latin America* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1987); Jon Sobrino, "Systematic Christology: Jesus Christ, the Absolute Mediator of the Reign of God," in *Systematic Theology: Perspectives from Liberation Theology*, ed. Jon Sobrino and Ignacio Ellacuría (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996); Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator. A Historical-Theological View*,
- ⁴ Bohache, *Christology from the Margins*, 88.
- ⁵ Sobrino, *Christology at the Crossroads: A Latin American Approach*, xi-xii.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, xv.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, xv-xix.
- ⁸ Migliore, *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*, 156-158.

- ⁹ David F. Ford and Mike Higton, eds., *Jesus. Oxford Readers* (London: Oxford University Press, 2009), 449-450.
- ¹⁰ Bohache, *Christology from the Margins*, 67.
- ¹¹ Kelly Brown Douglas, *The Black Christ* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 6.
- ¹² James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power*, 20th anniversary edition ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1969; reprint, 1983).
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 31.
- ¹⁴ Any theology that is contrary to the liberative motif is heretical. James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, Revised ed. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 36.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.
- ¹⁶ James H. Cone, 'Theology's Great Sin,' plenary address at the American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting, November 18, 2001, Denver, CO, quoted in Bohache, *Christology from the Margins*, 68.
- ¹⁷ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1970; reprint, 1993), 104-07.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.
- ¹⁹ Quoted in Douglas, *The Black Christ*, 1.
- ²⁰ Albert B. Cleage, Jr., *The Black Messiah* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968), 3. This book contains few details of the origin of the word black Christ in the American context.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² *Ibid.*, 4.
- ²³ Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 123.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 119-20.
- ²⁶ Cone, *God of the Oppressed*, 110.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 127.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*
- ³¹ Hill, *Jesus the Christ: Contemporary Perspectives*, 153.
- ³² Bohache, *Christology from the Margins*, 128.
- ³³ Some prefer to term it as Third-World context, because it reflects the quality of their life rather than numerical statistics. Cf. Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye, "Introduction," in *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), ix.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, xi.
- ³⁵ Delores S. Williams, "Womanist Theology: Black Women's Voices" <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=445> (accessed March 26, 2013).
- ³⁶ Chung Hyun Kyung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 39.
- ³⁷ Bohache, *Christology from the Margins*, 147.
- ³⁸ Kyung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology*, 52.
- ³⁹ For a good introduction on Asian Womanist Christologies refer to Virginia Fabella, "A Common Methodology for Diverse Christologies?," in *With Passion*

and Compassion: *Third World Women Doing Theology*, ed. Virginia Fabella and Mercy Amba Oduyoye (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1988), 108-17.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 110-11.

⁴¹ Kwok Pui-lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology* (Cleveland, Ohio: The Pilgrim Press, 2000), 80.

⁴² Cf. Aruna Gnanadason, "Towards a Feminist Eco-Theology for India," in *Women Healing Earth: Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion*, ed. Rosemary Radford Reuther (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1996), 74-81; Aruna Gnanadason, "Jesus and the Asian Woman: A Post-Colonial look at the Syro-Phoenician woman/Canaanite woman from an Indian perspective," *Studies in World Christianity* 7, no. 2 (October 2001): 162-77.

⁴³ Kyung, *Struggle to Be the Sun Again: Introducing Asian Women's Theology*, 56-7.

⁴⁴ Hisako Kinukawa, *Women and Jesus in Mark: A Japanese Feminist Perspective* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1994), 141.

⁴⁵ Cf. Ahn Byung-Mu, *Jesus of Galilee* (Korea: Dr. Ahn Byung-Mu Memorial Service Committee, 2004); Volker Küster, "Jesus and the minjung revisited: The Legacy of Ahn Byung-Mu (1922-1996)," *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* 19, no. 1 (2011): 1-18.

⁴⁶ Mark mentions that Jesus could no mighty works in his native town, because they did not believe in him.

⁴⁷ Hill, *Jesus the Christ: Contemporary Perspectives*, 161-62.

⁴⁸ Cf. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Hymn of the Universe*, trans., Simon Bartholomew (New York: Harper & Row, 1965).

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